

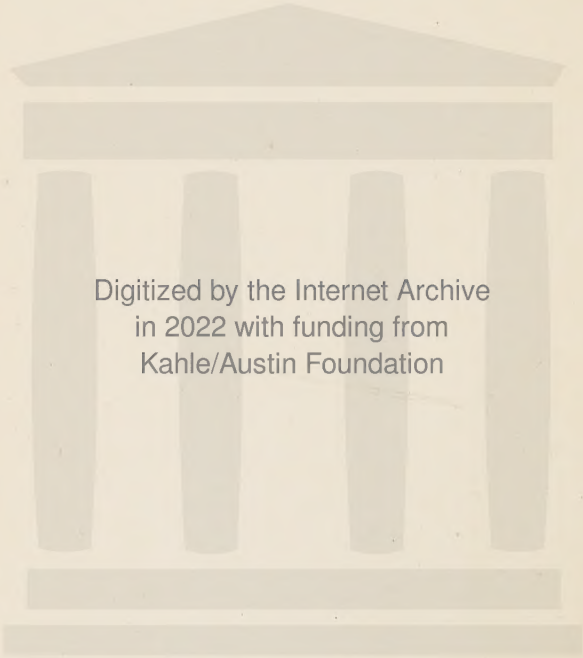
AT THE FEET  
of the  
DIVINE MASTER  

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HUONDER

Harold V Campbell

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# AT THE FEET OF THE DIVINE MASTER

Short Meditations for Busy Parish Priests

BY  
THE REV. ANTONY HUONDER, S.J.

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# CONTENTS

PREFACE . . . . .	xi
INTRODUCTORY REFLECTIONS: "ALTER CHRISTUS"—THE PRIEST THE LIVING CHRIST . . . . .	I
1. THE BAPTISM OF JESUS—Ordination . . . . .	10
2. IN THE DESERT—First Receive, then Give . . . . .	11
3. THE TEMPTATION—Three Dangers for the Priest . . . . .	12
4. "BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD!" . . . . .	14
5. AT THE WEDDING FEAST—Priestly Participation in Social Gatherings . . . . .	15
6. CHRIST AND HIS MOTHER—The Priest's Mother . . . . .	18
7. THE FIRST CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE—A Holy Anger . . . . .	20
8. NICODEMUS—The Convert . . . . .	21
9. THE BAPTISM OF THE DISCIPLES—"Invidia Clericalis" . . . . .	23
10. AT THE WELL OF JACOB—The Worldling in the Con- fessional . . . . .	25
11. JEWS AND SAMARITANS—Tolerance Towards Non- Catholics . . . . .	26
12. THE MYSTERIOUS FOOD—Unselfish Zeal for Souls . . . . .	28
13. THE RULER—Priests in Their Intercourse with Public Officials . . . . .	30
14. IN NAZARETH—The Prophet Among His Own . . . . .	31
15. THE PREACHING OF OUR LORD—The Preacher Blessed of God . . . . .	33
16. SKETCHES OF METROPOLITAN PASTORATION . . . . .	34
A. Shameful Degradation . . . . .	35
B. The Unclean Spirit—Saintly Priests . . . . .	35
C. Urban Squalor—Charity . . . . .	36
D. "All Seek Thee"—The Power of Priestly Per- sonality . . . . .	37
E. The Master's Morning Prayer—Necessity of In- terior Recollection . . . . .	38
17. THE MOTHER-IN-LAW OF PETER—Jesus and the Priest at the Sickbed . . . . .	40
18. THE SURGING MULTITUDES—Spiritual Revivals . . . . .	41
19. ONWARD!—Renunciation of Honors and Leisure . . . . .	43
20. "DUC IN ALTUM"—Out upon the High Seas . . . . .	44
21. THE MIRACULOUS CATCH OF FISHES—The Success is God's . . . . .	45
22. THE FISHER OF MEN—His Field of Operation, His Catch and His Methods . . . . .	46

23.	THE CURE OF THE LEPER . . . . .	48
	A. The Cure—Philanthropy and Charity . . . . .	48
	B. Recommended for Spiritual Care—Leprosy of the Soul . . . . .	49
	C. Stifling Publicity—Personal Pronoun Puffing . . . . .	50
24.	UNDER OBSERVATION—The Priest in Public . . . . .	50
25.	THE PARALYTIC . . . . .	52
	1. The Faith of Catholics . . . . .	52
	2. Remission of Sin . . . . .	53
	3. Words of Consolation . . . . .	53
26.	THE CALL OF MATTHEW . . . . .	54
27.	PARTICIPATING IN PUBLIC FUNCTIONS—Clerical Seclu- sion . . . . .	55
28.	MASTER AND DISCIPLES—Pastors and Assistants . . . . .	57
29.	BETHSAIDA AND THE CONFESSIONAL . . . . .	59
30.	THE INVALID OF THIRTY-EIGHT YEARS—Neglected Children of the Church . . . . .	60
31.	THE JOURNEY THROUGH THE FIELDS—Apostolic Ex- peditions . . . . .	61
32.	THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT—Apostolic Vocations . . . . .	62
33.	THE MAGNETISM OF THE MASTER—of the Priest . . . . .	63
34.	THE LEITMOTIV OF THE SERMON—"Blessed are the Poor . . . ." . . . . .	64
35.	THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD—The Clerical Sun . . . . .	65
36.	THE CITY ON A MOUNTAIN—Exalted Position of the Priest . . . . .	66
37.	THE MERCHANT OF CAPHARNAUM—The Officer and the Soldiers . . . . .	67
38.	THE PATRIOTISM OF CHRIST—of the Priest . . . . .	68
39.	THE YOUNG MAN OF NAIM—The Priest at the Death- bed . . . . .	71
40.	THE RELIGION OF THE POOR—The Church and the Care of the Poor . . . . .	73
41.	CHARACTER-SKETCH OF THE BAPTIST . . . . .	74
42.	THE INCONSISTENCY OF UNBELIEF—Impossibility of Giving Universal Satisfaction . . . . .	75
43.	WITH SIMON THE PHARISEE—The Art of Censuring . . . . .	76
44.	WOMEN AS DISCIPLES OF CHRIST—Female Attendants in the Rectory . . . . .	78
45.	THE BESIEGING MULTITUDES—Then and Now . . . . .	79
46.	BRETHREN OF JESUS—Meddlesome Relatives . . . . .	80
47.	THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER—Pastoral Cares and Problems . . . . .	82
48.	THE "MYSTERY OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN"—A Privilege of the Priesthood . . . . .	83
49.	THE SEED AND THE GROWING PLANT . . . . .	84
50.	THE COCKLE IN THE WHEAT—Battle with Renegades . . . . .	85
51.	THE TREASURE OF THE HOUSEHOLDER—Library and Study . . . . .	87
52.	THE STORM ON THE SEA . . . . .	89



# CONTENTS

v

A. Storms in the Life of the Priest . . . . .	89
B. The Slumber of the Master and His Awakening . . . . .	89
53. CHRIST CASTS OUT A DEVIL—The Demon of Impurity . . . . .	91
54. THE DAUGHTER OF JAIRUS—Sudden Sick-Calls . . . . .	93
55. THE WOMAN WITH THE BLOODY ISSUE—Scrupulous Persons . . . . .	94
56. APOSTOLIC JOURNEYINGS—Metropolitan Pastoral Care . . . . .	95
57. COMPASSION FOR THE PEOPLE—A Flock without a Shepherd . . . . .	96
58. THE HARVEST AND THE LABORERS—Dearth of Priests . . . . .	97
59. THE VICTIM OF AN EVIL WOMAN—"Où est la Femme?" . . . . .	98
60. "VENITE SEORSUM"—Yearly Retreats . . . . .	99
61. THE IMPOVERISHED MASSES—Neglected Parishes . . . . .	100
62. THE MULTIPLICATION OF THE LOAVES—Social Activity of the Church . . . . .	102
63. THE PRAYER OF OUR LORD—of the Priest . . . . .	103
64. HEADWINDS—Apparent Insucess . . . . .	105
65. THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF THE MASTER—The Asceticism of Hope . . . . .	106
66. THE SINKING PETER . . . . .	106
67. THE EUCHARIST—The Priest's Communion . . . . .	108
68. THE BANISHMENT FROM JUDEA—Victims of Persecution . . . . .	109
69. CORBAN—The "Causae Piae" . . . . .	110
70. THE CANAANITE WOMAN AS AN ADVOCATE OF THE FOREIGN MISSIONS . . . . .	111
71. THE DEAF MUTE—The Ceremonies of the Church . . . . .	113
72. THE LEAVEN OF THE PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES—Dangerous Influences . . . . .	115
73. THE TESTIMONY OF PETER—Preaching Christ . . . . .	116
74. THE ROCK OF THE CHURCH—The Priest as "Defensor Fidei" . . . . .	118
75. THE POWER OF THE KEYS—Alleged Usurpation of Divine Prerogatives . . . . .	119
76. THE TRANSFIGURATION ON THABOR—Hours of Prayer . . . . .	120
77. THE LUNATIC—Special Graces Must Be Earned . . . . .	122
78. CHURCH ASSESSMENTS—Ecclesiastical Privileges and Exemptions . . . . .	123
79. THE DISPUTE AMONG THE DISCIPLES . . . . .	124
A. A Clerical Table-Talk . . . . .	124
B. "Ambitio Clericalis" . . . . .	125
80. THE PRAISE OF CHILDREN—Childlike Candor . . . . .	126
81. SAFEGUARDING INNOCENCE . . . . .	128
A. The Priest as a Friend of Children . . . . .	128
B. The Clerical Child-Murderer . . . . .	129
82. THE EXORCIST—The Lay Apostolate . . . . .	130
83. THE TERRIBLE EITHER-OR—Proximate Occasion of Sin . . . . .	132
84. SALT WITHOUT SAVOR—The Inactive Priest . . . . .	133
85. SALVAGING THE WRECKAGE—"Se impendere et superimpendere" . . . . .	135

86.	THE LOST SHEEP—The Love of the True Shepherd .	137
87.	"SHOW THYSELF TO THE WORLD"—The Itch for Public Recognition . . . . .	139
88.	THE HATRED OF THE WORLD—False Compromises .	140
89.	TOWARDS JERUSALEM—The Acceptance of Voluntary Sacrifice—Clerical Horror of Death . . . . .	142
90.	THE ANGER OF THE APOSTLES—Indiscreet Zeal . . . .	143
91.	THE FIRST SUCCESSES OF THE DISCIPLES—of the Young Cleric . . . . .	145
92.	THE PRIEST AS CONSOLER AND CONSOLED . . . . .	146
93.	THE YOKE AND THE BURDEN—Pharisaical Imposition .	148
94.	"LEARN OF ME, FOR I AM MEEK AND HUMBLE OF HEART" . . . . .	149
95.	THE GOOD SAMARITAN—The Magna Carta of Christian Charity . . . . .	151
96.	JESUS WITH MARTHA AND MARY—The Apostolate of the Home . . . . .	152
97.	"MY DOCTRINE IS NOT MINE"—No Subjectivism in the Pulpit . . . . .	154
98.	PUBLIC OPINION CONCERNING JESUS—The Judgment of the Crowd . . . . .	155
99.	THE ADULTEROUS WOMAN—Jesus as the Prototype of the Confessor . . . . .	157
100.	THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD—Natural and Supernatural Light . . . . .	158
101.	SOLDIERS OF CHRIST—Pointed Polemics . . . . .	160
102.	CURE OF THE MAN BORN BLIND—Tactics of Unbelief—Persecution of Converts . . . . .	162
103.	THE HOSTILE SANHEDRIN—Influencing Public Opinion	163
104.	JESUS, THE GOOD SHEPHERD—A Picture of Ideal Pastoral Care . . . . .	165
105.	THE BAD SHEPHERD—Ignominious Pastoral Types .	168
106.	THE "OTHER SHEEP"—The Sheep Outside the Fold .	170
107.	"LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY"—The Pastor as the Paragon of Prayer . . . . .	170
108.	THE IMPETUOUS FRIEND—An Inscription for the Priest's Home . . . . .	172
109.	DELIVERY FROM A BLIND AND DUMB DEVIL—Difficult Cases of Conscience . . . . .	173
110.	CALUMNY—The Campaign of Slander against the Church and her Priests . . . . .	175
111.	CAUSTIC WORDS—Laudable Self-Defence . . . . .	176
112.	BY THE FRUIT YE SHALL KNOW THE TREE—and the Priest . . . . .	178
113.	THE UNCLEAN SPIRIT—Recidivi—The Power of Association . . . . .	179
114.	THE PARABLE OF THE TWO BLIND MEN—The Confessor of Priests . . . . .	181
115.	THE GLORIFICATION OF MARY—The Happy Lot of the Priest's Mother . . . . .	182



116.	PHARISAICAL RECTITUDE—The Woe Spoken to the Clergy of Israel . . . . .	184
117.	THE EXPOSURE—The Dark Secret of the Priest . . . . .	187
118.	FEAR OF GOD AND HUMAN RESPECT—Apostolic Candor . . . . .	188
119.	LOYAL WITNESSES—Clerical Deserters . . . . .	190
120.	INHERITANCE QUARRELS—Aloofness from Commercial Transactions . . . . .	191
121.	THE PARABLE OF THE RICH MAN—Clerical Misers . . . . .	192
122.	WORLDLY AND OTHER-WORLDLY IDEALS—The Priest and Modern Commercialism . . . . .	194
123.	GIRDLE AND LAMP—Purity and Faith . . . . .	197
124.	THE ALERT SERVANTS—The Aging Priest . . . . .	198
125.	THE WISE AND FAITHFUL STEWARD . . . . .	200
126.	GREAT GRACES, GREAT RESPONSIBILITIES—The Divine Economy . . . . .	201
127.	THE FIRE OF TRUTH—No Compromises with Error . . . . .	202
128.	TRUE AND FALSE PEACE—Unavoidable Dissonances . . . . .	203
129.	THE BARREN FIG-TREE—Inscription on the Tomb of a Priest . . . . .	205
130.	THE INFIRM WOMAN—Depressed Souls . . . . .	206
131.	THE RULER OF THE SYNAGOGUE—Clerical Bureaucracy . . . . .	207
132.	THE MUSTARD SEED AND THE LEAVEN . . . . .	208
133.	THE DEADLY HATRED OF CHRIST . . . . .	210
134.	SHEPHERD AND SHEEP—Object and Task of the Priest- hood . . . . .	211
135.	STONING—The Motive of Hatred against the Priest- hood . . . . .	213
136.	THE PROOF OF DIVINE MISSION—The Evidence of a Holy Priesthood . . . . .	215
137.	THE NUMBER OF THE ELECT—Rigorism in the Pulpit . . . . .	216
138.	THE SALVATION OF THE HEATHEN—The Missionary Spirit among the Clergy . . . . .	219
139.	THE LAST SHALL BE THE FIRST AND THE FIRST LAST— Surprises at the Last Judgment . . . . .	220
140.	PHARISAICAL INTIMIDATION—Persecution of the Church . . . . .	221
141.	CHRIST'S REPLY TO HEROD—Politics in the Pulpit . . . . .	222
142.	THE HEN AND HER BROOD—Pastoral Solicitude . . . . .	224
143.	THE INVITATION TO DINE—The Spirit of St. Vincent in the Rectory . . . . .	225
144.	THE PARABLE OF THE INVITED GUESTS—Church Visits and Neglect . . . . .	227
145.	THOUGHT BEFORE ACTION—Pastoral Prudence . . . . .	229
146.	THE PARABLES OF THE LOST SHEEP AND THE LOST DRACHMA—Zeal for Souls . . . . .	230
	A. The Lost Sheep—The Pursuit of the Shepherd . . . . .	231
	B. The Lost Drachma—Value of a Soul . . . . .	232
	C. The Joy over the Converted Sinner . . . . .	232
147.	THE PRODIGAL SON—The Priest as Father—as Prodi- gal Son . . . . .	233
148.	TWO MASTERS—Serving God and Man . . . . .	234

149.	DIVES AND LAZARUS—The Eternal Compensation— Dealing with the Novissima . . . . .	236
150.	SCANDAL—in the Church and among the Clergy . . . . .	237
	A. Unavoidable Scandals . . . . .	237
	B. Clerical Scandals . . . . .	238
151.	FRATERNAL CORRECTION AND RECONCILIATION—Clerical Irreconcilableness . . . . .	240
152.	VITANDUS—The Priest's Conduct toward Non-Church- Goers . . . . .	241
153.	THE UNFORGIVING SERVANT—Severe and Considerate Confessors . . . . .	242
154.	"INCREASE OUR FAITH"—The Priest's Prayer . . . . .	243
155.	MASTER AND SERVANT—Whole-Hearted Devotion to Duty . . . . .	244
156.	BETHANIA—Visiting Families . . . . .	246
157.	THE SICKNESS OF LAZARUS—Christ a Model of Pas- toral Sick Care . . . . .	247
158.	TOO LATE—"Died without the Sacraments" . . . . .	248
159.	THE CALL OF PAINFUL DUTY—Priestly Heroism . . . . .	250
160.	THE DEATH OF LAZARUS—The Priest among the Be- reaved . . . . .	251
	A. The Death-Chamber . . . . .	251
	B. Priestly Compassion . . . . .	252
	C. Priestly Sympathy . . . . .	252
161.	THE RAISING OF LAZARUS—Spiritual Awakenings . . . . .	253
162.	THE JEWISH MALCONTENTS—Unreliable Friends . . . . .	255
163.	THE LOGIC OF UNBELIEF AND HATRED—Muzzling the Church . . . . .	256
164.	THE TEN LEPERS—Undisposed Penitents . . . . .	257
165.	INGRATITUDE—a Bitter Experience of the Priest . . . . .	258
166.	"THE KINGDOM OF GOD COMETH NOT WITH OBSERVA- TION"—The Inherent Power of the Church and its External Manifestation . . . . .	259
167.	THE PARABLE OF THE UNJUST JUDGE—Partiality to the Rich . . . . .	261
168.	PHARISEE AND PUBLICAN—Uncharitable Comparisons and Superficial Judgments . . . . .	262
169.	ADMONITION TO HUMILITY—No Humility of Weakness . . . . .	264
170.	THE INDISSOLUBILITY OF MARRIAGE—Hard Conse- quences . . . . .	266
171.	CELIBACY—Its Foundation in Christ . . . . .	267
172.	THE DIVINE FRIEND OF CHILDREN—Church and Youth . . . . .	269
173.	THE RICH YOUNG MAN—Young Men and the Priest . . . . .	270
174.	THE DANGERS OF WEALTH—Not Allowing Oneself to be Blinded . . . . .	272
175.	THE REWARD OF POVERTY—Recognition of Goodness . . . . .	273
176.	THE LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD—"Obsecra, Increpa" . . . . .	275
177.	THE HIDDEN MYSTERY—Love of the Cross . . . . .	277
178.	SALOME—An Ill-Advised Plea . . . . .	278
179.	THE BLIND MAN FROM JERICHO—Priest and Beggar . . . . .	279

180.	THE CHIEF OF THE PUBLICANS OF JERICHO—Aloofness of the "Anti-Clericals" . . . . .	281
181.	THE ANOINTING OF OUR LORD IN BETHANIA . . . . .	282
	A. Woman in the Service of the Master . . . . .	282
	B. The Complaint of Judas . . . . .	283
	C. Tactless People . . . . .	284
182.	THE ENTRANCE INTO JERUSALEM—Corpus Christi Processions . . . . .	285
183.	THE TRIUMPH OF THE PRIEST—First Mass and Jubilee . . . . .	287
184.	JESUS WEEPS OVER JERUSALEM—The Disappointment of Failure . . . . .	288
185.	"THEY SOUGHT TO DESTROY HIM"—Separation from Rome . . . . .	289
186.	SECOND PURIFICATION OF THE TEMPLE—Difficult Reforms . . . . .	290
187.	THE FAITH THAT MOVES MOUNTAINS—Miracles and Prayer . . . . .	292
188.	THE PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD—Demoralized Parishes . . . . .	293
189.	THE EMPEROR'S TRIBUTE MONEY—Political Difficulties . . . . .	294
190.	DIVERGENCE BETWEEN WORDS AND ACTIONS—The Logic of the People . . . . .	296
191.	THE WIDOW'S MITE—Donations of the Poor . . . . .	297
192.	THE PROSELYTES—Experiences among Non-Catholics . . . . .	299
193.	THE GRAIN OF WHEAT—Sacerdotal Spirit of Sacrifice . . . . .	300
194.	"FATHER, SAVE ME FROM THIS HOUR"—The Hour of Sacrifice . . . . .	301
195.	THE ATTRACTION OF THE CROSS—The Priest's Power of Attraction . . . . .	302
196.	THE TIMID FOLLOWERS—Pastoral Consideration . . . . .	304
197.	"JUDGE NOT"—Severe Judgments against the Priest . . . . .	305
198.	THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE—The Decay of the Priesthood and its Consequences . . . . .	206
199.	FALSE MESSIASES—Modern Fictions concerning Christ . . . . .	307
200.	THE PARABLE OF THE VIRGINS . . . . .	308
201.	THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS—Unemployed Talents in the Church . . . . .	310
202.	THE FAITHFUL SERVANT—Priestly Labors and Compensation . . . . .	311
203.	WARNINGS OF THE STORM—Lack of Foresight . . . . .	312
204.	THE LAST JUDGMENT—Anxiety and Consolation for the Priest . . . . .	314
APPENDIX. Prayer of St. Ignatius for Generosity in the Service of God (to be recited at the Close of each Meditation) . . . . .		316
INDEX . . . . .		317



## PREFACE

In Christ, our Lord, we have a priestly ideal which neither can nor will lose its freshness and vigor.

"Christ, the same yesterday, today, and in eternity" (Hebr. xiii, 8).

This ideal is beautifully depicted for us in the pages of Holy Writ. It is the fulfillment of the words of the Master:

"I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also" (John xiii, 15).

Here is the priest's source of life, light, guidance, consolation, and strength. No phase of the priestly life, no difficulty, no task, which is not portrayed here; no question of pastoral care which is not fully answered.

"At the feet of the Master," then, the priest must shape his life. The Saints, too, must be our mentors. We can learn from a Paul and an Apollo, as masters of this divine school. But these are human, secondary, derived authorities. Why not return to the source, to the Master of masters, to the highest authority? "What then is Apollo and what is Paul? The ministers of him you have believed." (I Cor. iii, 4 sq.). They teach in part, not the whole. "One only is your Master" (Matt. xxiii, 8).

It is clear, then, how important is the contempla-

tion of the life of our Lord for the priest. It is for him the practical school of life. But it can become this only when unreservedly founded upon Christ and when His life is made the norm for every phase of the priestly career.

The attempt has been made in these pages to place the pastoral aspect of the Gospels in higher light than is customary in the ordinary books of meditations for priests. This, as is evident, is not striven for in the elaboration and embellishing of detailed pictures, but rather in the more thought-provoking form of the suggestive sketch. It marks the main path-ways of thoughtful reflection; it directs rather than leads, leaving to the freedom of personal initiative the by-ways of pleasant and fruitful pioneering.

The author has kept the priest and, particularly, the pastor of souls principally in mind. Hence he did not attempt to exhaust the rich mine of thought that each Gospel incident contains. These succinct suggestions should serve as material for priestly contemplation rather than for sermons and instructions.

Though this book is intended for the clergy in general, the pastor of souls is foremost in my mind. Pastoral duties, especially in a big city, make tremendous demands upon the priest engaged in the cure of souls. A thousand duties press daily upon the busy pastor, a thousand cares weigh down upon him every day.

To understand this is to be lenient in the demands for lengthy daily meditations. Neither the time nor the strength remains for such a task.



But this very fact necessitates a regular, though brief, period of daily meditation.

Fifteen minutes at the feet of the Master is not beyond the most active pastor of souls. In such intimate, reverent communing, when Christ's Presence is felt, His eyes bespeak consolation and encouragement, His word and counsel strengthens, the humble disciple looks to Him and says: "Yes, Lord, to Thee I shall be faithful, for Thee I shall live and labor: help me, bless and strengthen me."<sup>1</sup>

This is possible and desired by all who are sincerely in earnest in regard to their holy vocation.

And again, it is a fact that the priest of to-day, immersed in an extremely practical and material atmosphere, has little opportunity or encouragement to live a life in which the contemplative element predominates.

Hence these sketches have been drawn with an eye for the conditions of the time in which the vast majority of priests fulfill their divine vocation.

Many Gospel incidents, particularly significant for the pastor of souls, have been left untouched in this collection of meditations. It is hoped that, *Deo volente*, they may be gathered together and made useful at some future time under another title.

Repetitions of certain thoughts and animadversions occur throughout these meditations. This requires no

<sup>1</sup>It is to be understood, of course, that the author does not mean to limit these meditations to fifteen minutes. Half an hour is and remains more desirable. Yet the busy priest will welcome a presentation which makes a short meditation possible under all circumstances.

apology, I believe. In a book of reflections on the spiritual life, which aims at serving as a philosophy for the School of Life, such repetitions are a pedagogical necessity.

The order of these meditations follows that of the widely used Harmony of the Gospels by the Rev. J. B. Lohmann, S. J., for which reason an enumeration and a complete presentation of the Gospel texts are not given.

Foremost in the intention of the author has been the presentation of a series of meditations for priests in a new and more timely manner.

Perhaps this attempt will call forth abler efforts than mine.

ANTONY HUONDER, S. J.

Valkenburg, Holland.

# AT THE FEET OF THE DIVINE MASTER

## INTRODUCTORY REFLECTIONS

*“Alter Christus”—The Priest, the Living Christ*

MUCH has been beautifully said and written concerning the value and dignity of the Catholic priesthood. But its nature, mission, and fundamental idea may be expressed most succinctly in one word: The priest is the living Christ, *alter Christus*.

*Thus it is verily.*

He, the Master, is no longer visibly in our midst. He has gone to the Father. “I go to the Father.” (John xvi, 28.)

But He has not entirely deserted the sheep of His flock. “See,” He assured them, “I am with you all days even to the end of the world.” (Matt. xxviii, 20.)

He remains here, and, indeed, in a twofold manner: personally, but invisibly in the tabernacle; impersonally, but visibly in his delegated representatives,—the Apostles and their successors—bishops and priests. Our Lord thus lives and continues His labors through the centuries in the person of the Catholic priest.

As of old he continues to gather the crowds about Him and teaches them in the Temple, on the green

hillside, by the sea-shore, at the well of Jacob, in the house and by the wayside. He calls the dear little ones, and they come, now as then, and look up to Him with eyes full of confidence and love. He comforts the widow, who mourns a departed son, and the sister, who sorrows for the loss of a brother. He soothes the sufferer with the same kindly words: "My son, my daughter, be comforted." He ever follows the wandering sheep and carries it back, on loving shoulders, to the fold; He embraces, rejoicingly, the lost son upon his return; He holds out a saving hand to the sinful woman and lifts her from out of the depths of degradation. He goes up and down the land, spreading His benefits as of yore. Nothing is lacking; every phase of His life finds its exact counterpart at all times and in all places, wherever the Catholic priesthood is true to the Master's mission. Thus it is and

*thus it should be.*

For that is,

1. The *will* and *design* of our Lord. He desired to leave a visible substitute for His personal presence, so that His work would be carried forward. He therefore identifies Himself wholly with his disciples and co-workers. They are His "friends," His "brothers," His "comrades," with whom He has all things in common. He commits to them

His *mission*: "As the Father has sent Me, so I send you";

His *power*: "Do this in commemoration of me."

"Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them . . .";

His *authority*: "He who hears you, hears me; he who despises you, despises me";

His *sufferings* and *persecution*: "The servant is not greater than his master. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. The disciple is not greater than the Master. . . . ; have they reviled the lord of the house Beelzebub, how much more his domestics";

His *successes*: "If they have kept My word they will keep yours also." (John xv, 20);

His *title*: "What ye shall loose shall be loosed in heaven"; good shepherds: "Tend my sheep"; Light of the world: "Ye are the light of the world"; Teachers: "Go ye and teach."

His *example* shall be their only norm ("I have given you an example").

His *presence* their consolation ("I shall remain with you").

His *glory* their reward ("I go to prepare a place for you").

In short, to all and each His word is: "As I—so you"; the most complete equality shall be the rule in all things: *Omnia mea tua, omnia tua mea sunt*.

Never did a king so completely identify himself with his ambassadors and representatives as did Christ.

The priest is thus, truly, an *alter Christus*. Thus did the Master will it.

To this end also, necessarily leads

2. The *priestly office* itself. For the whole life and work of the cleric is related to Christ, the Master, either, (a) in His Eucharistic or (b) in His Mystical Body.

(a) In the Holy Eucharist, Jesus Christ created a living memento of Himself ("Do this in commemoration of Me"). But for the most Holy Sacrament, how easily He would be forgotten; whereas now the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and Communion constantly refresh our memories and keep them renewed. No one, however, lives in such intimate union with the Eucharistic Lord as the priest. Every morning, in the most solemn of moments, he whispers in the name of and in the very words of Christ, the words of consecration, seats himself with the Apostles at the Last Supper, rests on the breast of the Master, touches Him with his anointed hands, holds Him aloft so that all may gaze upon Him and treasures Him in the tabernacle of his heart.

He is the guard of the Most Holy, he alone has the key to the tabernacle, he alone opens it, brings the Saviour in the form of bread to the communion-rail, or out into the highways and byways to the sick and dying. The tinkling bell announces his coming. The good people sink down reverently on doorstep or wayside to receive the blessing of Him whom the priest bears. He carries the Master in procession out into the open field through street and public square, over flowers and foliage, under



canopy and boughs which the Christ-loving people have prepared.

The "Saviour and Nourisher" is given all this honor, this jubilation, this love. But a portion redounds to the priest, since he is intimately united with the Lord under the appearance of bread, as the host with the monstrance and ciborium.

Thus is the life and labor of the priest closely knit up with the life and labor of the Eucharistic Lord. In fact, they cannot be separated.

The priestly labors of the day begin and end at the altar. Here he makes the final night-visit, in order to give reckoning of the day's undertakings, to ask pardon, and once more to receive the Master's blessing. Though he may forget the Master at times, in the heat and turmoil of the battle, yet altar and tabernacle bring reunion.

(b) When the priest is not engaged with the Eucharistic Body of Christ, his services are being bestowed upon the mystical body of Christ.

His work leads him from the altar to the confessional.

Scarcely anywhere else does the priest come so forcefully to the realization that it is not in his own name that he occupies that place. Rather, as *alter Christus*, does he raise his hand to bind or loose, to console, to admonish, to absolve in His name: *Ego auctoritate ipsius te absolvo*.

And if the priest were to become oblivious to all this, the people themselves would remind him of it.

What brings the man of venerable years to the youthful chaplain, what gives the people the courage to uncover the innermost recesses of their consciences, to tell him what no one else may know? They consider him not as Mr. So-and-So, but as the representative of their Lord and Saviour.

And is it, perhaps, his own teaching that the priest announces from the pulpit? No, for there also he is the commissioner of the Lord and assumes His position. "Teach what I have taught you!" "Who hears you hears me." He should, in some measure, replace the great Master, who once charmed the people with His words.

But even outside the Church the priest of God cannot forget who he is, even if he would. His garb, which sets him apart from all others, warns him that he is a *segregatus a populo*, an *electus*, a disciple of the Lord, no longer Simon bar Jona, but Peter; not John the son of Zebedee, but John the evangelist.

In spirit, Christ goes before him. He enters with him into the school, the hovel of the poor, the prison; He stands beside him at the bed of the sick and dying and walks at his side with every step he makes as priest.

Of course, this realization is not always clear and direct. Thus it was even with the Apostles,—their eyes were not always directed to the Master, nor their thoughts, nor their speech. They received false impressions, labored under wrong ideas and, indeed, were at variance among themselves or—slept, while He tarried or suffered but a few steps away.

But there remains that half conscious realization

that He lingers nearby, that He sees and hears and reads their thoughts.

It cannot be otherwise so long as the priest has not lost his taste for spiritual things and become worldly-minded. Worldly cares and interests may absorb his energies for a time, enshroud and at times even completely obliterate the spiritual presence of Christ, but his office, which has so exactly the characteristics of a representative, again and again recalls the presence of the Lord and Master.

And if the priest should forget, the members of his flock would remind him.

What is it that brings the little ones so full of confidence to him, what causes them to look up to him with such reverent joy, and kiss his anointed hands? Is it not that they know that, as the priest of God, he represents the Divine Lover of children?

And whence the reverence, respect, and love which the faithful bestow upon him?

Does not all this rest on faith in Christ, who in the fullness of His divine powers transmitted to the priest his claim to love and reverence?

"Who hears you hears me; who despises you despises me." And again: "He that receiveth you, receiveth me" (Matt. x, 40). How productive these words have become in the lives of Christian peoples! How the faithful love and reverence their priests, esteem their position, are sensitive of their honor and deeply grieved if it is betrayed through the defection of an unworthy member.

All the greater, therefore, is the guilt of a priest

who shakes the belief of the faithful in this ideal and sets before them an unworthy likeness of the Divine Master.

\* \* \*

And now to summarize. The priest should portray Christ as accurately as possible and carry forward His work among the faithful. In a word, he should be an *alter Christus*, a living Christ. That is the shortest, the most apposite, and the most beautiful formula for a programme of the priestly life. And with this is determined the goal and norm of clerical asceticism.

There must be the greatest possible conformity to the Original. (Rom. viii, 28). "I have given you an example that you may do as I have done." The first priests, *i. e.*, the Apostles and Disciples, had this example constantly before them and they enjoyed the ineffable privilege of personal companionship.

"That which . . . we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled . . . we declare unto you . . .", so writes the beloved disciple in joyful satisfaction. We, the late-born, have not this wonderful grace, but we have that remarkable portrait of Christ which the four Evangelists have painted for us. How life-like Jesus stands before us! We can, in spirit, sit at His feet with the Apostles and drink in His divine words, accompany Him on foot from place to place and see what He does, how He talks and teaches, and how He associates with the people, the sick and the children.

In this wise the meditation on the Life of our Lord becomes for the priest a school in which he studies the divine portrait, line upon line, until his whole being is saturated with it and he truly becomes an *alter Christus*.

## 1. *The Baptism of Jesus—Ordination*

“AND Jesus being baptized, forthwith came out of the water: and lo, the heavens were opened to him: and He saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon Him.” (Matt. iii, 16 ff.; Mk. i, 9; Luke iii, 21).

1. The baptism of Christ in the Jordan, with its attendant revelations, marks as it were the official entrance of our Lord upon His public life. It is performed in the most solemn manner: the heavens open, the Holy Ghost descends in symbolic form upon Jesus, and a voice from above declares within hearing of a wondering people: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

2. The entire scene, characterized by a sublime and impressive simplicity, finds its exact and striking counterpart in the ordination to the priesthood.

What is it? At bottom nothing more than the divine authorization to enter upon that holy vocation which demands nothing less than the vicarship of Christ and the assumption of His divine tasks. Through it the priest enters, publicly and solemnly, upon his office. For did not the heavens open, as it were, over you also on the day of your ordination? In answer from above to the beseeching petition, *Veni Creator Spiritus*, came the reply, *Accipe Spiritum Sanctum*.



3. Through clouds of incense and the shimmer of candles came the reply of the heavenly Father, who accepted you as the representative of Christ. The people remained deeply moved at what they saw consummated before their eyes in that impressive moment.

The high dignity came from above. How profoundly you were conscious of this fact at that solemn moment! From above came the light, the grace, the voice, the elevating consciousness that you were a priest of God.

"For which cause I admonish thee, that thou stir up the grace of God which is in thee, by the imposition of my hands." (2 Tim. 1, 6.)

## *2. In The Desert—First Receive, then Give*

"Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert . . ." (Matt. iv, 1; cfr. Luke iv, 1 sqq.; Mark i, 12 sq.)

1. From out of a solitary retreat came Moses, Elias, and the holy Precursor; from out of a solitary retreat came the divine Master to enter upon His public life. Thus it has ever been in the Church. From out the depths, like stars, rose a Benedict, a Boniface, a Bernard, a Francis of Assisi, a Dominic, and an Ignatius. In seclusion they gathered that light and strength and evolved those ideas and plans which made them capable of imperishable deeds.

2. From the seclusion of a seminary and the retreat of a novitiate priests and apostles of the Church step into public life. Thus it must necessarily be. In

the heart of far-off mountains arise the streams and rivers which carry strength and nourishment to the broad fields and forests. First receive, then give; first contemplate, then undertake.

3. It is only in the quiet of the yearly retreat that the priest is able to regain that interior recollection and gather that strength and inspiration so necessary to live apart and keep up courage in the prosecution of his daily duties.

"Then Jesus was led by the spirit into the desert . . ."

### 3. *The Temptation—Three Dangers for the Priest*

"Then Jesus was led by the spirit into the desert, to be tempted by the devil." (Matt. iv, 1; cfr. Mark i, 7 sqq.; Luke iv, 1).

The threefold temptation of our Lord is intimately connected with His calling as the Messiah. The evil one attempted to lure Him from the mission designated by the heavenly Father. To this end also are directed the efforts of the enemy against the Apostle and Pastor. In these temptations occur also the three same characteristics.

1. There is, first of all, the inordinate care of the body. The clerical state is placed in the higher levels of the social strata, so that, where normal conditions exist, a good standard of living prevails. This is, as a matter of fact, taken for granted by the public at large. With this, however, comes the danger that

solicitude for the physical well-being will predominate to the detriment of the spiritual.

Nothing so hinders spiritual development as the pampering of the body. *Est modus in rebus*. "Not in bread alone doth man live," finds its application here also.

The soldier must be prepared to suffer hunger and thirst, and even, at the sound of battle, to leave his fare and proceed to duty. Likewise, the missionary and pastor must learn to bear the pangs of hunger and to labor, if duty calls, without refreshment.

2. Another temptation to which clerics may be subjected, is that leading to inordinate ambition and an empty self-satisfaction. The clerical state is regarded with great honor and reverence, and in this lies a danger to weak human nature.

The vainglorious priest is deceived by actual or imagined results. He overestimates his abilities and encounters dangers which he is incapable of overcoming; he prosecutes without measure the work of his particular field; and he is drawn *ad exteriora* by the spurious appeal to "come before the people," where loud acclaim accompanies every popular effort.

3. A third temptation to the priest may be that of avarice and lust of power. The clerical state, even at present, presents the opportunity of attaining wealth, honor, and power. Thus it is not unlikely that the tempter would lead the servant of the Master to the hills of worldly desire, from whence he would point out the riches of the world. The Church is not of

the world, but *in* it, and therein lies danger for bishop, prelate, and priest. The coveting of a rich parish or ecclesiastical dignity has done untold harm to the honor and glory of God's Church and caused the loss of many souls. Whole pages of medieval history are besmirched with avarice! *Haec omnia tibi dabo, si cadens adoraveris me.* But God again and again sends His warriors, great popes and saints, who cry out against the princes of this world, "*Vade Satana!*"

#### 4. "*Behold the Lamb of God!*"

(JOHN I, 29)

Though Isias (liii, 7,) has used the figure of the Lamb, it was St. John the Baptist who first applied it to our Lord and Saviour. And Christ, at the time, gratefully acknowledged it. This figure has since become a household word in the Church, which is repeated in every mass and in every litany.

1. "*Behold the Lamb of God!*" The figure as feelingly and appropriately expresses the character of our Lord: His spotlessness, meekness and gentleness, as well as His sacrificial act on the Cross and the altar, a proof how clearly the Precursor recognized Jesus as the true Pascal Lamb.

2. "*Behold the Lamb of God!*" is the exclamation of St. John, as he points to that noble figure which silently, humbly, and without ostentation, wanders on the banks of the Jordan as one of the multitude. "He is in your midst and ye know Him not."

"Behold the Lamb of God," is the exhortation of the priest in the solemn moment of the communion of

the Mass, as he presents to the faithful the Body of our Lord, which they are about to receive. In what commonplace, natural manner does He appear here under the appearance of bread, and yet: "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sins of the world."

Thus this word resounds in the Church of Christ as a wonderful, never-ending echo through the centuries and is as potent to-day as it was on the banks of the Jordan 2,000 years ago.

3. Two disciples hear the word and follow it; they become the first true companions of the Master and are happy in His presence.

"Behold the Lamb of God," thus the exhortation goes out, and behold they come, reverently and humbly, the numberless faithful, old and young, men and women, the sick and the well. They acknowledge Him and find in Him their hope and joy, their Saviour and Consoler.

#### 5. *At the Wedding Feast—Priestly Participation in Social Gatherings*

"And Jesus also was invited, and his disciples, to the marriage." (John ii, 2)

1. The mission of the Savior was the renewal of mankind in all its phases. He restored the ideal of the family and made of married life the foundation of social existence, a holy sacrament. He was, therefore, a willing guest at the celebration of the wedding-feast at Cana in Galilee.

Nor was His presence a hindrance to the merry-making; it served, rather, to ennoble and enrich it.

Our Lord is no enemy of pleasure, and His appearance casts no shadow of gloom. Wherever He appears, eyes grow brighter, hearts beat faster, and people leave with joy and thanksgiving in their hearts.

2. So, too must the pastor and shepherd of souls be, whose mission it is to share the sorrows and joys of the flock and to dispense consolation, assistance, and blessings.

There must be no shutting oneself up, no false holding aloof from the world; just as there must be no undue participation in social gatherings, no cheapening of the priestly dignity by unseemly and unbecoming revelry. The golden mean must be adhered to always. There should be wholesome joy and spontaneity, tempered by dignity and moderation; a hearty participation and yet a well-bred restraint. Priestly sociability is an art to be cultivated by every cleric.

3. The Master changes water into wine. Though this lies beyond the power of the disciple, he is capable of another transformation:—he can change the froth of frivolity into the wine of true sociability.

True joy is an art, worthy of the efforts of the priest to make it known among his people.

This is most easily accomplished by example.

4. Generously and graciously our Lord dispensed six jugs of good wine at the request of His blessed Mother. This clearly proves that unqualified prohibition cannot be justified either by the word or example of our blessed Lord. Indeed, the fact that He appeared in this instance, as in so many others, with His Mother and the Apostles at the festive table

demonstrates that religious perfection and high personal sanctity do not demand total abstinence. Nor does any evangelical counsel require it.

A norm is thus presented to the priest.

Voluntary abstention as atonement for sinful excesses deserves praise and recognition. And, where local and peculiar circumstances demand clerical example for the furtherance of a necessary reform, there will not be lacking that priestly generosity which willingly makes any sacrifice for the salvation of souls.

But total abstinence is and will ever remain a work of supererogation. It cannot be made a duty of conscience, or a distinguishing mark of the true priestly character.

5. Thus did Jesus manifest "His glory, and His disciples believed in Him."

This is the grace the Apostles received at the wedding-feast of Cana. From that hour they were more intimately and closely united with their Divine Master. And to whom are they indebted for this grace? It was obtained through the intercession of the Mother of Jesus.

Thus, for the first time, does Mary appear, in a remarkable manner, as the aid to a religious vocation. *Per Mariam ad Jesum* is the age-old Catholic formula, which, without doubt, goes back to the wedding-feast at Cana. If her intercession is potent in behalf of all Christians, how much more in behalf of God's anointed!

"And the Mother of Jesus was there"—she was there, too, when God called *you*.



6. *Christ and His Mother—The Priest's  
Mother*

“And the mother of Jesus was there.” (John ii, 1).

1. How useful and instructive it is for the priest to contemplate the relationship between Son and Mother in this picture! No complete separation has as yet taken place. Nor is it definitely marked out in the Gospels. Rather, it is clearly stated that Mary accompanied Jesus to Capharnaum. (John ii, 12).

However that may be, the accustomed relationship, during almost thirty years of the hidden life at Nazareth, can no longer continue in the years of Christ's public ministry. This is evident from His answer to His blessed Mother at Cana, which re-echoed the words spoken eighteen years previously: “Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?”

There is no jarring note in all this. The marriage-feast presented the occasion for the inauguration of Christ's miracles. The Mother's request is not contrary to the intentions of the Son, who willingly fulfils her desire. Thus Mary understood it: “Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye.”

He complies with her request, but no longer as the dependent, subject child, but as the Man, according to his own judgment.

2. Application can easily be made to the life of the individual priest from the conduct of our Lord in this instance, particularly at the present time, when communication and intercourse between members of a family are so easy.

It is possible, therefore, to continue the manner of life at Nazareth; nor would this, in any way, jeopardize the character of the *cura ordinaria* of the priest.

Nevertheless, the old relationship between mother and son ceases. The nature of his obedience has been raised to a higher level. He is no longer *subditus illis*.

A truly Christian mother will unconsciously find her proper place, especially with the beautiful example of the Blessed Mother before her.

But this will not always be true. At times it may be the duty of the priest to determine the proper attitude and help in its accomplishment without causing the slightest tension in the filial ties. For, while he remains the earthly child of the mother who bore him, a grateful son, more closely united to her than to any other living person, it is equally clear that his vocation called him from the family circle, to whose ends and purposes he may not subject his life's work. Though a respectful regard for the opinion of the members of his own family is always in place, yet he may not countenance an inordinate dependence and intercourse. This would limit the freedom of his priestly action and prejudice his position in the eyes of the people whom he tries to serve.

7. *The First Cleansing of the Temple—  
A Holy Anger*

(JOHN ii, 14-25)

1. There is a holy anger, which in its proper place and time, befits the clerical dignity. Not to grow angry or be filled with righteous indignation is not necessarily an attribute of perfection. Again and again we see the eyes of the Son of God flash with anger and His brow redden under the quickened pulse of a righteous indignation. The storms of holy passion rage across that countenance, ordinarily so calm and majestic. But these fires are not enkindled by pride, vanity, self-seeking, or an inordinate self-love; they are an untainted flame which neither soot nor blackens. It is divine anger, aroused because of a thwarted honor and glory due to God alone.

There is no mistaking this. It is clear from the manner of His conduct, His words and glance. The Apostles understood it and recalled to themselves the words of Holy Writ: "The zeal for Thy house hath consumed me."

Withal, He remains complete master of Himself.

Our Divine Lord applied physical force to the money-changers and cattle-raisers. He routed the bellowing cattle and scattered the neatly stacked coins clinking over the marble floors. This energetic action was necessary to stigmatize as it deserved the unworthy use of the temple of God.

A portion of the people, and even of the priests, im-

mediately aligned themselves with Him (Nicodemus, thereupon, came to the Master) and considered Him in a new light.

And yet from out this stormy scen there flashes, beautifully, a divine mildness towards those poor traffickers who dealt in doves!

2. A holy anger is befitting and brings with it blessings. Yet how easily is it energized by an unworthy self-love! The *zelus domus Domini* may become potent *in destructionem, non in aedificationem!*

### 8. Nicodemus—The Convert

(JOHN iii, 1-21)

1. Nicodemus is the type of generous converts, those noble souls who, though outside the fold and numbered among the enemies of the Church, yet make their way to the Truth and Light. In their nobility and uprightness they instinctively feel that the one-sided judging and unseemly persecution of the Church is unjust and un-Christian and an expression of malevolent hate and deeply ingrained prejudice.

It is not the part of the well-poised mind to prejudge what is little known and understood. Thus they begin to scrutinize the life and teachings of the Church and to study her from unprejudiced and unpoisoned sources, until they come to the same conclusion as Nicodemus: "For no man can do these signs which thou dost, unless God be with him."

This conviction impels them to an expression of

their views and to seek personal acquaintance. But there is a reticence to make an approach by light of day, and so they come circuitously and under cover of darkness.

2. The history of the majority of conversions can be touchingly and impressively summed up as follows: the pusillanimous postponement of the meeting with the priest; the approach to the rectory, in fear and trembling; the painful first moments of the conference; the increasing pleasantness of the disillusionment as the hour sped on, with the final complete possession of inward joy and peace, as for the first time grace is allowed to function freely.

What a beautiful example the Master presents for the direction of souls! Though the hour is late, and He is weary from the exacting labors of the day, yet He heartily welcomes Nicodemus, and after putting him at his ease, gives him His whole attention, far into the night. Thus He wins for His heavenly Father another noble soul.

3. This is our norm for the instruction of converts. We find here repeated all the arguments usually brought forward by non-Catholics: pre-judgments and misrepresentations of the Church, unimaginable misunderstandings of her doctrines and Sacraments. Everything has been strangely distorted as in a concave mirror. Would-be converts are like children in these matters and as children they must be dealt with; the most elementary explanations must be patiently made in the beginning.

9. *The Baptism of the Disciples—"Invidia Clericalis"*

(JOHN iii, 22 sqq.)

1. John baptizes in Ennon near Salim. But since our Lord and His disciples began baptizing at the Jordan, there was a diversion of the stream of people who were anxious to learn of the new doctrine. The disciples of John looked with envy on this turn in events and carried their grievance to their Master: "Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond the Jordan, to whom thou gavest testimony, behold he baptizeth, and all men come to him."

Here is a striking example of that unfortunate *invidia clericalis* which has so often repeated itself in the Church of Christ between religious orders, between secular and religious clergy, between priest and priest; that jealousy which has given so much scandal and hindered so much good.

What is the inward source of this strife and dissatisfaction? They give expression to it when they mentally declare that "We were here first, we are first in seniority; how dare this ambitious seeker cross our path?" And again: "We are the better ones. We fast, they do not; we are of the strict observance, we exemplify in dress and fare true poverty and penance, whereas they. . . ."

But the prime cause of jealousy is and remains: "All men come to him." While the Church of the dissatisfied priest shows less attendance, that of his rival is constantly growing. The confessionals and



pulpit of the latter are becoming uncomfortably popular. There is no denying the fact, for even the old clientèle is gradually drifting away. Could it be otherwise than that poor weak human nature should wince under such treatment!

2. It is particularly noteworthy, however, that only the disciples express themselves in this fashion; far otherwise our Lord and the Precursor. In spite of outward differences they are of one mind. With what marvellous humility does John conduct himself! Upon the appearance of Christ, he immediately steps back, makes way for his Master, and truly rejoices that his loss of prestige means the increase of that of the Lord. He is the Messiah, the Bridegroom, the Word, the Lamb of God; He comes from heaven, I from Earth.

On the other hand, the attitude of Jesus toward the Precursor is no less remarkable. He approaches St. John, is baptized by him, encourages him at every opportunity, calls upon his authority and condemns the priests and Pharisees for their unwillingness to listen to the holy Baptist!

Nor has this spirit died out. Great men of God and their disciples, who were true to the spirit of their masters, knew no self-seeking, no jealousy, no envy.

It is only the *homunculi*, the dwarfed in spirit, who wear the dress and the name but have not come into the possession of the true spirit of their vocation, that speak and act as the disciples of St. John once did.

10. *At the Well of Jacob—The Worldling in the Confessional*

(JOHN iv, 4-42)

This scene vividly illustrates a line of practical action. It exemplifies to us, in the first place, Christ's conduct with women.

1. He does not withdraw from them; on the contrary, the feminine element plays a conspicuous rôle in His public life.

"Come to Me all," pleads the Master, and He does not debar the woman, who needs His grace and salvation above all else. It is remarkable, in this instance, how He engages in conversation with an uncultured woman. A request for a drink presents the opportunity to enter gracefully upon a spiritual topic.

The wonderful water, which would quench the thirst forever, arouses cynical doubt; but the unexpected revelation of the very secrets of her soul comes as an illuminating stroke. She feels that she is in the presence of no ordinary person: "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet."

Reverence begets confidence. He had touched her moribund soul to a new life, and she asks for a complete solution of her difficulties. He places the whole religious question on a new and higher plane and discloses Himself as the Messiah.

One conversation with Him sufficed to lift a soul from the depths into the Light, to make of a wayward soul a penitent and messenger of grace for others.

"Come and see the man who has told me all things whatsoever I have done. Is not He the Christ?"

2. Does not the confessional renew for us daily this scene at the well of Jacob? The worldly woman approaches. For her it is the usual appearance at the well; there is no thought of higher values, no disposition to bring about a radical change in her conduct. There will be a refilling of the jug and the return home. The old ways will be adhered to.

But lo! here is a man after God's own heart, at once earnest and gentle. How differently he speaks, how he pierces the innermost recesses of the soul, how surely he points out the besetting sin! The worldly woman at his knees takes new heart; she experiences the swift workings of a mighty grace. Such is the efficacy of a man of God, of a "prophet."

The ground has been prepared for the coming of a new spring; the penitent returns home with an inward peace and joy heretofore unknown. It is impossible to confine it; others must know of it also.

"Come and see a man who has told me all things whatsoever I have done."

Since that meeting at the well and its recorded confession, untold multitudes have found the water that became a fountain springing up into life everlasting.

## II. *Jews and Samaritans—Tolerance Towards Non-Catholics*

The scene at the well of Jacob illustrates for us

Christ's intercourse with unbelievers, and non-Catholics generally.

1. The orthodox Jews considered Samaria a land of heresies. A relationship existed between the peoples of these two countries similar to that which we find to-day between Catholics and Protestants. The exterior separation into many church-going bodies had led to interior divisions and animosities. This isolation had destroyed the basis for mutual understanding and friendship. Mistrust, enmity, and prejudice followed. Thus were the children of one race divided into two hostile groups, as the result of a dissension inherited from earlier days. How shall the priest, the pastor in the diaspora, conduct himself towards this problem?

Surely, here too, a glance at the Master will show the right way.

2. Our Lord does not shun intercourse with the Samaritans: rather, He seeks it and strives to bridge the gulf that exists between Jew and Samaritan. The Sicharite woman had expected that the Rabbi would proudly ignore her. She was greatly astonished and delightfully surprised when He spoke to her in such a friendly manner.

Thus He gained her confidence and, by His gentle dignity, her reverence.

3. Our Lord does not inject controversial questions into the conversation, but is satisfied to teach her in answer to the questions which she puts to Him. His answer is directed against a twofold error.

In the first place, she believed that the entire difference between the two denominations was bound up in the answer to the question, whether Garizim or Jerusalem "is the place where men must adore." Apparently, she relegated God to a local habitation.

Our Lord instructs her as to the spiritual nature of God and that he must be adored "in spirit and in truth."

Moreover she believed that the two religions were equally true and had an equal right to existence.

Clearly and distinctly the Master points out the involved fallacy. Though there may be not a little of human imperfection in the Church of Israel, yet: "You adore that which you know not: we adore that which we know; for salvation is of the Jews."

Thus with all personal tolerance and magnanimity, there is no false interconfessionalism, no pushing back of dogmatic boundaries.

4. What is the fruit of His obliging, yet dignified conduct?

He has brought back a wandering soul and has gained for Himself the confidence and reverence of an entire community; He has sowed the seed which will slowly but surely ripen unto a bountiful harvest, even though another may do the reaping.

Here are some important lessons for the harassed pastor of souls in modern communities.

## 12. *The Mysterious Food—Unselfish Zeal for Souls*

1. The scene at the well of Jacob contains yet an-

other lesson, which the priest and the missionary should not overlook. The Master seats himself at the well after a long, hot journey under the burning eastern sun, which has made Him tired, hungry, and thirsty. How necessary is this respite!

But see, there comes a wandering, erring soul which must be saved. In an instant all lassitude, all hunger is forgotten. One idea, one supreme desire predominates, and the joy of having saved a soul satiates more than all earthly food.

"I have meat to eat which you know not: . . . to do the will of Him who sent me, that I may perfect His work."

These words give us a deep insight into the heart of the true priest,—that heart which knows but one desire: the honor and glory of God and the salvation of souls.

2. We behold here the victory of the spirit over the flesh. There are those in whom the desire for knowledge and the search for truth is so strong that they forget the demands of the body and would break down were it not that others cared for them.

Likewise there are priests and missionaries whose boundless zeal for souls makes them forget all bodily discomfort and fatigue. The satisfaction of having done good, of having saved a soul, is for them a wonderful nourishment. Their hearts are quickened by a heavenly consolation.

The disciples did not understand the mystery contained in the words: "I have a meat which you know not."



But the time will come when they will know of this heavenly food and, carried on by the strength of the spirit, by the great apostolic idea, will consider all else of little importance.

13. *The Ruler—Priests in Their Intercourse  
with Public Officials*

(JOHN iv, 43-54)

1. An important factor in the life and work of every pastor of souls is his relationship with public officials; for, whether the latter are favorable or unfavorable to him, on them, in great measure, depends the efficacy of his work.

Hence it is necessary to find the proper means to make himself acceptable without in any way foregoing anything of the priestly dignity and apostolic freedom.

Here, again, the Master supplies us with a splendid example. Again and again He betakes himself to the civil or military authorities, to the captain or commandant of the garrison at Capharnaum, to the presiding officer at the synagogue, to the tax-collector, etc.

In this instance it is a ruler, perhaps the overseer of the Herodian estates, whose wife, Joanna, appears later as one of the holy women (Luke viii, 3).

The Master wins them all and makes no one His enemy.

His personality impells them to reverence and respect Him. We see how all approach Him in a reverential attitude.

The same will be the case, under similar circumstances, with the priest. The inveterate enemies of the Church excepted, an upright, conscientious priestly life will command respect even from non-Catholic officials, particularly when the good of the whole community is at stake.

2. In this instance the ruler is led to the Master by the love of his child. His son is ill, and since he knows that Jesus can help, and is confident that He *will* help, he puts aside all considerations which might otherwise have deterred him and suppliantly approaches the Divine Lover of children.

In no other manner can the priest so easily gain an entrance to the hearts of parents as by a tender regard for the children. This is a golden wand which opens many a bolted door.

#### 14. *In Nazareth—The Prophet Among His Own*

(LUKE iv, 16-30)

1. Who is there that does not love his birth-place, that spot to which cling so many youthful memories, where every tree and crag greet us with old acquaintanceship? What joy awaits the returning native who has been crowned with success! How enheartening, when on every side warm welcomes greet him! But what pain when he must notice the jealous glances of his former companions and the cool reserve of families which formerly gave evidence of regard and esteem!

What bitterness when the cup of greeting which the

beloved birthplace offers to its returning son, contains the dregs of disregard! This, our Lord also experienced.

His fame preceeded Him and His name was on every lip. These reports had awakened mixed feelings among the inhabitants. Some, whose pride of place was fed at the thought of one of theirs reaching the heights of fame, received Him with open arms. Breathlessly, they awaited His first discourse. At first, inquisitiveness predominated; the charm of His personality, the mighty appeal of His words enslaved them all. But green-eyed jealousy soon injects its poison; despicable envy soon arises and a small provincialism inquires: "Is not this the son of Joseph the carpenter? And they grew angry with Him."

2. The velvet words of flattery were acceptable to them, but that He, "the son of the carpenter," should pose as a prophet, with authority to teach and advise them, ruffled them. To this was added disappointment that He did not perform a miracle for them.

And that He should now, moreover, stop to cut incisively across their unworthiness and display it to them so unmistakably, is beyond their endurance. Angrily "they rose up and thrust Him out of the city," determined to lead Him to the brow of the hill, whereon their city was built, that they might cast Him down headlong.

But lo, a ray of divinity emanates from Him. They are rooted to the spot, while He walks leisurely through their midst. Thus they behold a miracle. How bitter must this event have been to them and how pain-

ful for the tender heart of His mother! Have not similar occurrences been recorded in the lives of saints, and is it not as true to-day as it was then, that a prophet is without honour in his native land?

15. *The Preaching of Our Lord—The Preacher  
Blessed of God*

“And it came to pass, when Jesus had fully ended these words, the people were in admiration at his doctrine. For He was teaching them as one having power, and not as the scribes and Pharisees.” (Matt. vii, 28 sq.; cf. Mark i, 22; Luke iv, 32).

1. We have here a terse description of the wonderful impression which the appearance and discourses of our Lord made upon the people.

Just as when a congregation, accustomed to dry-as-dust, bookish sermons, is confronted by an inspired preacher, eyes glow and hearts beat faster; a breathless stillness pervades all and not a single word is lost.

Like parched earth, these souls receive the downpour of grace; a new revelation has been made to them. Deeply moved, yet inwardly satiated, they leave the Church with praise upon their lips.

Each subsequent sermon has an increase in audience as well as in enthusiasm. A second spring has welled up in their hearts, and from the depths of their souls rise, by way of fitting climax, the words: “Holy God, we praise Thy Name.”

2. This is but a weak comparison of the impression which the words and appearance of our Lord made upon His listeners. Even now the lifeless words on the holy pages that have come to us out of a far distant past contain an unmistakable and incomparable beauty, appeal, and power.

What must have been their appeal as they flowed fresh from the lips of the Master, whose majestic mien and godly power gave a preternatural effectiveness to His utterances!

There is, indeed, something magnificent, something god-like about a preacher blessed of heaven.

#### 16. *Sketches of Metropolitan Pastoration*

Capharnaum, "His City", was at that time, according to our knowledge, the most important town on the Sea of Genesareth. Owing to its position at the intersection of several caravan-trails, it became a large commercial center, with a mixed Jewish-pagan population—all in all a replica of our modern cities with their overcrowding, their superficiality, their pursuit of pleasure and their poverty and squalor, both physical and moral.

Here the Master makes His abode and begins what might be termed metropolitan pastoral duty. It was here, in the synagogue, that He made His great Eucharistic promise, converted Levi, and became the center of some of the most stirring scenes of the Gospels. It was here that He prodigally lavished His Love and power.

*A. Shameful Degradation.*

For many, very many, our Lord's presence and efforts become the occasion of grace and conversion. But the city, as such, remains unmoved; the plenitude of grace becomes for it a curse.

"And thou, Capharnaum, which art exalted unto heaven, thou shalt be thrust down to hell" (Luke x, 15), are the parting words of our Lord. Even the efforts of the divine Pastor of souls comes to naught before the depth of urban degradation.

*B. The Unclean Spirit—Saintly Priests*

(Luke iv, 31 sqq., Mark i, 21 sqq.)

1. It is significant that our Lord begins His Apostolate in the city by exorcising an unclean spirit.

The scene has about it all the elements of a drama. The Master is discoursing in the Synagogue. The audience is wholly enraptured and enthralled by His words. Suddenly a shrill cry pierces the silence: "Let us alone, what have we to do with Thee, Jesus of Nazareth? Art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee, who Thou art, the holy one of God."

It is the voice of urban degradation crying out against the Divine Master.

The injection of the preternatural into the common-places of life has an astounding effect. Fear is in all hearts; all eyes turn from the possessed to the Master, whose mission has been given such unusual recognition. His calm earnestness pacifies the crowd. He scornfully commands: "Be silent and depart!" and immediately the evil one submissively departs.



His word has a mighty efficacy.

Fear, wonder, and reverence come over each countenance. A murmur runs through the crowd: "What word is this, for with authority and power He commandeth the unclean spirits, and they go out?"

Like wildfire the report spread through the town and vicinity and the inhabitants made speedy preparations for his coming.

2. The care of souls in the cities is the pressing problem of our day. Our Lord here presents the solution. Holy priests must perform miracles of grace. Only the unusual and extraordinary impresses the indifferent masses. Heroic love, heroic zeal for souls are necessary. St. Clement Hoffbauer in Vienna is a modern example.

### *C. Urban Squalor—Charity.*

"And when it was evening, after sunset, they brought to Him all that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door." (Mark i, 32 sq.)

1. Here again we have one of those unusual scenes which occur occasionally in the lives of great saints. Fleet-footed rumor had carried the tidings of the discourses and miracles of the great Prophet far and wide. The whole city was breathless. All wanted to see Him. The open space before the house, the adjacent streets, the bank of the river, even the walls and roofs of the houses, are covered with people. Each one longs for a glimpse and the closest proximity. In front of the house lie the sick on stretchers and blank-

ets and in the arms of their attendants. Others are being brought up. There are sufferers of every kind: the deformed, the lame, the blind, human wrecks covered with abscesses and tumors, the tubercular and dropsical, all are represented. Pale faces, bleary eyes, wizened forms, in short a complete tableau of city squalor.

The Master moves among them as an angel of mercy, "lays His hands on every one of them" (Luke iv, 40) to show partly that He shrinks from no malady, partly, that the power of healing comes from Him directly.

How often and how touchingly is not this scene repeated for us in our hospitals, barracks, cholera-wards and in the dispensaries for the poor in mission fields! Everywhere we find the living Christ.

What is it that calls forth love in the nursing sisters, heroic immolation, angelic sweetness? Whence comes to the priest the courage to seek out squalor and misery in order to exercise his God-given powers, if not from the thought of Christ, whose *caritas urget nos?*

#### D. "All Seek Thee"—The Power of Priestly Personality

I. The Master has suddenly become popular among His own people. Little wonder. He radiated a magnetic attraction. His whole appearance was a wonderfully harmonious union of unusual dignity and gentleness, embellished by a remarkable expression of the eyes, tone of voice, and graceful gesture, while His miraculous powers had spread an aureole over His

personality. In short, a priestly representation in ideal outline! And down through the ages this wonderful influence has continued, even to our own day.

2. "All seek Thee." Fitting words! Would that they were as applicable to Christ's representatives, that worthy imitators of Christ walked among the people and saved them from the idols of power and wealth whom they so strenuously worship!

The appearance of a truly apostolic man of God calls forth similar scenes even to-day. The multitude throngs to hear his sermons; his confessional is besieged early and late, and wherever he appears, crowds surround him with eager and longing eyes.

"All seek Thee."

3. ". . . And the multitudes sought him and came unto him, and they stayed him that he should not depart from them" (Luke iv, 42).

Only those who have witnessed and experienced the devoted following of a successful preacher, missionary, and retreat-master, and who have known the sorrow of parting with a man who has profoundly influenced their interior lives,—only they can appreciate fully what is here related.

O priest of God, how wonderfully elevated is thy calling,—who canst make some small amends for poor errant mankind to that God who once walked visibly amongst us, and whose every step brought grace and salvation!

*E. The Master's Morning Prayer—Necessity of Interior  
Recollection*

"And rising very early, going out, He went into a

desert place, and there He prayed" (Mark i, 35).

1. The duties of a pastor in a modern city are as inimical to the interior life and to recollection as the grind and noise of an industrial plant to mental concentration. His numberless cares and worries are like the hundred feelers and suckers of a giant polyp. In the midst of this constant turmoil, and immersed in the miasmatic atmosphere of worldly affairs, the priest of God lives and has his being. Whether he will or no, he beholds the alluring panorama of luxurious living, he hears the strains of insinuating music, he beholds the seamy side of life, and he opens his heart to rehearsals of evil such as only the modern city buries beneath its shiny surface.

In the midst of such activities he must keep himself pure and inviolate. How is this possible, unless he precipitates the fog of worldliness with the rays of a true interior recollection, as the Master did by way of example?

2. Though this incident at the house of Peter took place late at night, nevertheless Jesus, "rising early, going out, went into a desert place, and there He prayed."

Here we are vouchsafed a glimpse into the ascetical life of our Lord. He sleeps little and rises early. Late rising is not conducive to a good morning meditation, which would furnish strength for the day's work. Peter calls our Lord, not from sleep, but from meditation, to wait upon the multitudes who throng to see Him.

Priest of God, how can you remain recollected if

you do not constantly return in prayer to God? How can you be an instrument in the hands of God if you do not constantly unite yourself to Him by fervent ejaculations?

Will not a spring which has lost connection with its source dry up?

He who gives more than he receives is on the road to bankruptcy. This is as true in the supernatural as in the natural order.

Divine Master, teach us how to pray!

"And Jesus rising very early, going out, went into a desert place, and there He prayed."

17. *The Mother-in-law of Peter—Jesus and the Priest at the Sick-Bed*

(Luke iv, 38 sq.; Mark i, 29 sqq.; Matt viii, 14 sq.)

1. Visiting the sick is one of the most important duties of the pastor. Christ beautifully exemplifies this in the incident here related.

Sorrow reigns in the home of the fisherman by the sea-side. The mother-in-law of Peter is prostrate with fever. The fact has come to the attention of the Master, and He asks to see her.

Behold in what friendly manner he greets the family, with what ease He accommodates Himself! He ascends the steep stairway which leads to the sick-room, as is the case in village cottages.

There she lies—a peasant woman, well advanced in years. What joy, what honor to be thus visited!

Jesus at the sick-bed! Behold Him and see how

He conducts Himself, how graciously He associates with, converses, consoles, and enlivens the sick!

"He took her by the hand," not shrinking from this token of intimate friendship, and "lifted her up." The withered hand of the aged woman rests in His sacred palm, and from His eyes a friendly light shines upon her.

In that moment her limbs quicken, her eyes glow with life, and her whole body takes on new vigor.

"My God, I am cured!" she cries out joyfully. She becomes again the busy housewife, who assumes all the duties of her household. The best covering is spread and the most delicious fish is served. How happy she is to wait upon Him whose presence has brought health and happiness to her humble home!

2. Are your visits to the sick equally efficacious?

How satisfying and enheartening they are if properly performed, and how distasteful and oppressive, on the contrary, if the sick-room is invaded by a marble-hearted priest, who performs the soul-stirring ceremonies of the Sacraments mechanically and whose countenance radiates no sympathetic love!

A sick-call of this kind does not "raise up"; it oppresses like a lowering cloud. The poor patient breathes more freely when the priest has disappeared.

### 18. *The Surging Multitudes—Spiritual Revivals*

"And it came to pass that when the multitudes pressed upon him to hear the word of God, He stood by the Lake of Genesareth." (Luke v, 1 sqq.)



1. The dry, unemotional word-spinnings of the doctors of the law provide no spiritual nourishment for the people, who hunger for better things. It is not surprising that they now crowd about the Master, who announces and interprets the word of God in the fullness of its depth, beauty, and power.

How lean at times is the fare that is placed before the faithful even to-day!

A minister of this kind is not an *alter Christus* athirst for souls, who arouses his hearers, but a depressing dictator or an inapproachable professor who coolly lays before his audience ineffectual book-learning.

Poor people, how they hunger for better fare and how they throng about the man who preaches the word of God as it ought to be preached!

2. The multitudes crowd about Him. In the unbounded enthusiasm of the moment, the niceties and amenities of life are cast aside. It is the same to-day. During a successful mission, or retreat, or on some other special occasion, the faithful flock to the confessional and the communion-rail in overwhelming numbers.

But behold the ingenuity of the Master; how thoughtfully He accommodates Himself to every emergency! He climbs into a skiff, starts off, and anchors a short distance from shore. Thus He has improvised a pulpit, and the shores of the quiet bay become an amphitheatre, where His voice rings clear and true over the shimmering waters. Not a note of impatience mars His serenity. "He shall not cry out

angrily, and yet His voice shall be heard on the highways."

19. *Onward!—Renunciation of Honors and Leisure*

The appreciative hearers attempt to detain Him in their impetuosity; but He pushes forward.

"To other cities also I must preach the kingdom of God. Let us go to the neighboring towns and cities, that I may preach there; for to this purpose am I come." (Luke iv, 43 sq.; Mark i, 38 sq.)

1. Onward! Let those whose renown as preachers and missionaries is widespread, mark well the conduct of their Master. There may be a temptation to linger in the places of their greatest victories, to be feasted by the fawning multitudes. The Master had no time for such empty self-indulgence, but passed on to other fields as soon as He had accomplished the work laid out for Him.

2. Onward! How harsh this word may become! Here is a zealous pastor, whose untiring efforts have brought him the esteem, love, and admiration of his beloved flock. And now he has to leave! Others come to reap the harvest. He must go to fields where pastoral pioneering is necessary! His superiors have called him and that is sufficient.

"For to this purpose am I come."

3. Onward! "In other places also must I preach the kingdom of God."

Thus runs the battle cry of the courageous missionaries in our great pagan centers of population. There life is one ceaseless series of manœuvres to

## 44 AT THE FEET OF THE DIVINE MASTER

outwit the enemy. Wherever their leader directs, there they willingly go.

*Quam speciosi pedes evangelizantium pacem!*

But there is consolation for the soldiers of Christ. The Master, too, is foot-sore and weary in the ceaseless quest for souls.

Onward! Onward!—is *His* battle-cry also.

### 20. "*Duc in Altum*"—*Out upon the High Seas*

"Launch out into the deep!" (Luke v, 4.)

1. Do you hear, reverend pastor of souls? "Make for the deep!" Loiter not along the quiet shores, make for the high seas, where great hauls await your efforts. Be not satisfied with your daily round of duties, with that which lies within easy reach. Make for the high sea, for the paths beyond your cramped surroundings, into the homes, the highways and by-ways, and go among the masses! Is not your calling that of a fisher of men? He is a poor fisherman, indeed, who avoids the high seas, afraid of every squall and storm!

Make for the deep! Does not this watchword ring in the ears of many a young priest who finds his powers cribbed and cabined by unsuited tasks? Make for the high seas! From distant mission fields the cry is heard: "Come, come to us; here is work a-plenty, here is rich reward, here is the place for supple strength, for untired powers, here you can save thousands who cry for salvation!" Up! Make for distant fields!

21. *The Miraculous Catch of Fishes—The Success is God's*

(Luke v, 4-11)

1. "Let down your nets."

A good haul brings gladness to the heart of a fisherman. His eyes gleam, his hand quivers with joyful expectation, as he draws in his net filled with splashing, flopping fish. Peter's was a wonderfully rich catch; never before had the like been made on the Sea of Genesareth. And such fish!

The top strands part. The weight is too great and the hands too few. Peter motions others to his aid, and they fill two boats almost to the point of sinking.

2. Up to this point Peter was fully occupied in completing his haul, but now it dawns upon him that a miracle has taken place. He and his companions are filled with awe. Deeply moved he falls at the feet of Jesus: "Lord depart from me, I am a sinful man." He recognizes in the loving assistance and the gracious condescension of the Master His determination to draw him to His Sacred Heart. A feeling of terror at the greatness of his calling passes over him, as he senses his own unworthiness. "Depart from me," he exclaims; choose another for Thy work.

3. And now the application. Even to-day, how strangely long periods of impotence, futility, and bootless toil suddenly give way to seasons of rich harvest. The Master has apparently abandoned his apostolic missionaries, who labor in far distant fields, to the

end that there may arise a clear consciousness of unfruitful striving. It is the cold night of failure. Then comes the dawning of "His hour." There is nothing new in this to the experienced missionary.

In X, where appearances and circumstances were so favorable, the mission was a failure. Sadly you voiced the words of Peter: "We have caught nothing." In Y, where everything seemed unfavorable, success was so great that assistance had to be summoned.

How foolish in such cases to ascribe the results to your own efforts! No, indeed, "it is the Lord's"; to Him belongs the honor. Fall down before Him in all humility and say with Peter: "Lord, depart from me, I am a sinful man."

## 22. *The Fisher of Men—His Field of Operation, His Catch and His Methods*

"Fear not, for from henceforward thou shalt catch men." (Luke v, 10).

How strikingly the apostolic vocation is here characterised.

1. The fisherman plies his trade on the sea—the sea of human life, lashed into a fury by the storms of passion or reposing in stagnant calm. In this great water live millions of fish. Who could even begin to catch them? A fisherman is satisfied if he catches a few and calls it a lucky strike if he catches more.

How does this picture correspond with pastoral work in the great mission field of our own country and

particularly in the immeasurable stretches of the heathen world with its uncounted millions!

Here, too, a miraculous catch may occasionally be made—a conversion of whole districts accomplished, so that the little boat is overloaded. But how often the poor missionary kneels after long and fruitless toil and complains bitterly: “Master, the whole night have we labored and caught nothing.” Consoling the voice from the tabernacle assures him: “Fear not, for from henceforward you shall catch men.”

2. The fisherman’s prey is the denizen of the water, one of the shyest of animals. In order to catch fish, it is necessary to take into consideration the condition of the weather, wind, and temperature. The fisherman must know the favorite haunts of the fish and study their habits. Likewise, the fisher of men must have a deep insight into human nature and employ ingenuity, circumspection, and patience. He must know how to bide his time, select the proper place, and use tact in approaching men. This leads to a consideration of

3. *The Method of Making a Catch.* Our Lord does not compare the apostle with the hunter, who picks up a scent and follows the clue until he has trapped his prey. He compares him to the fisherman, who throws out a hook or a net, without knowing exactly what may be his luck, satisfied with what God may send him.

Likewise the preacher and missionary does not address himself to one individual, but rather to the whole congregation, to all classes. He spreads his

words as a net, hoping that though some may escape him, yet a portion will be his.

Then compare the instruments which each uses. The fisherman does not wield the sharp and deadly spear of the hunter, he employs the net which throws about the catch its enticing meshes.

That is characteristic of the apostolic vocation. The apostle is not harsh, bellicose, gruff, or autocratic; rather he is mild, prudent, and cautious, not repelling but attracting.

Great masters of the spiritual life like a Francis of Assisi, an Ignatius, a Francis Xavier, a Francis de Sales, a Vincent de Paul, and many other great fishers of men, have been true to this ideal. And God has made their work fruitful with miraculous catches.

### 23. *The Cure of the Leper*

LUKE V, 12 sqq.; MARK i, 40 sqq.; MATT. viii,  
2 sqq.)

#### *A. The Cure—Philanthropy and Charity*

Poverty and misery may assume forms which attract sympathetic action. A beautiful sickly child soon discovers hearts into which it makes an easy entrance. Hunger and sickness do not banish beauty; rather, they spiritualize it.

Where squalor, however, lays bare its most disgusting wounds, philanthropy shrinks back and leaves the field to Christian charity. With it there is no wavering, no hesitation, no half-measures. Charity



looks upon its divine Model and beholds Him bending lovingly over the leper to bind and heal his wounds.

Here again the Master beheld you as missionary and pastor. He saw the many hovels of the poor and outcast, so repulsive in the filth, the vile odors, and the dark, dank atmosphere in which they eke out an existence. He saw the rebellion of your nature against such work, but also how the grace that came through His example brought you strength and courage.

“He pitied the leper; reached out His hand and touched him.”

Who will say that His example did not give the beloved Father Damien the strength and courage to continue his work among the lepers of Molokai!

#### *B. Recommended for Spiritual Care—Leprosy of the Soul*

The pastor of souls seldom comes in contact with leprosy of the body. In the confessional, however, he meets spiritual leprosy in its most disgusting forms. Forget not, then, the words of the Master to the leper: “Go show thyself to the priest.”

When these unfortunates come to you, therefore, remember that the Saviour has sent them by His divine grace.

Receive them with a sympathetic, Christ-like love. Be not harsh and inflexible. Have patience; help them arise and encourage those that are disheartened to the point of despair. Why pursue them farther, why extinguish the last spark of hope by relentless hounding?

"Have pity on me, at least you my friends," is applicable here.

*C. Stifling Publicity—Personal Pronoun Puffing*

"See to it that you tell no one."

Again and again we hear these words from the lips of our divine Lord. He opposes any personal glorification of His works. He shuns the adulation of the crowd and disappears from those in whom he has awakened enthusiasm.

What is your attitude, as pastor and missionary, towards honors and recognition? Do you inwardly rejoice to have your accomplishments held up for public admiration and applause, or do you perhaps glory in advertising yourself?

The sweet venom of praise has poisoned the heart of many a priest. It cannot be denied that much adulation is accorded the work and word of a gifted priest. In so far as this tends to the greater honor and glory of God, it is good. But how dangerous is self-glorification and futile boasting! How commendable, on the other hand, is the effort to do all things with an eye to God's pleasure!

*24. Under Observation—The Priest In Public*

"And it was heard that He was in the house, and many came together, so that there was no room; no, not even at the door; and He sat there and taught. And the scribes and Pharisees were there also." (Luke v, 17 sq.; cfr. Mark ii, 1 sq., Matt. ix, 1 sqq.)

1. The word has scarcely gone out that our Lord is

in Capernaum, when the multitude is upon Him. The house is crowded as a church during a mission. Every available spot is taken; corridors, stairs and doorways, all are filled.

There He is seated in the midst of the multitude,—the object of every gaze, the center of attention.

“He sat there and taught.”

As a priest you are often called upon to participate in public gatherings of one kind or another—parish, civic or professional,—in which you become the cynosure of all eyes. Do not on such occasions forget your priestly character, your position as a leader in the community, your peculiarly vulnerable position as a man under the scrutiny of many eyes—some friendly, some inimical, but all ready to take offense at the slightest provocation.

2. In the audience that day, there sat a delegation of scribes from Jerusalem, who were addressed directly by our Lord.

“ . . . There were also Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, that were come out of every town of Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem. . . .”

It is at such times and in such places that a priest comes in contact with people who are strangers to him, who may, perhaps, be outspoken enemies of the Church or at least disposed to take an unfriendly attitude towards “clericals.” Their eyes are fixed upon him, to snatch an opportunity of justifying their prejudices.

3. The priest must realize that he is in every sense of the word a “public servant.”

In no other walk of life is the dictum, *ex uno disce omnes*, applied with greater or more revengeful satisfaction.

In public gatherings, the priest has an excellent opportunity to satisfy the title "reverend gentleman" in the eyes of the captious; his quiet, gentle, transparent presence will impress them whether they will or not.

"He sat there and taught."

## 25. *The Paralytic*

### I. *The Faith of Catholics*

"And behold, men brought in a bed a man who had the palsy. . . ." (Luke v, 18; cfr. Mark ii, 1 sqq.; Matt. ix, 1 sqq.)

The charitable instincts of ordinary folk are well presented in this incident as related in the Gospels. Four men, probably neighbors of the paralytic, became the instruments of a great miracle. They are determined to reach the Master; if not through the regular passages, then from above, through the roof! Where there is a will, there is a way. Did not, perhaps, an appreciative smile pass over the countenance of Jesus as He witnessed this stirring scene? He does not fail to praise the lively faith of these men. The zealous priest likewise rejoices when his apparently unrewarded labors suddenly burst forth in the deep faith of his people, during a mission, or in the fervent piety of a retreat, or in the still more tangible and significant fact of daily and weekly

communions; then moments of ineffable consolation are his.

## 2. *Remission of Sin*

"He blasphemes. Who can forgive sin but God alone?"

Such murmurings are not unknown even to-day. The anti-Catholic, and even the so-called neutral press constantly rings its changes and insinuates an assumption of divine powers on the part of the Catholic clergy.

Non-Catholics instinctively feel the power of the confessional: in some quarters it is openly recognized and substitutes are attempted. In some, however, the power is not only not recognized, but condemned as autocratic and pernicious.

The priest can point to the divine effects which constantly flow from the confessional; to the spiritually sick and dying who come and are made whole again—who, relieved from an intolerable burden, go away rejoicing in the Lord.

"That you may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sin," He said to the lame: "I say to you arise, take thy bed and go home."

How pleasant is the homeward journey from those oases of grace, the confessionals and shrines of the Catholic Church! He who has seen it and experienced it, is overcome with wonder and amazement. "And they said: today we have witnessed wonderful things."

## 3. *Words of Consolation*

"Be of good heart, my child, thy sins are forgiven thee."

We have here an example of the confessional admonitions which the divine Master Himself was wont to give. These are not artificial and wooden formulæ repeated over and over. No, they are words of consolation, each bearing an individual, a personal message. For example: "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest some worse thing may befall thee" (John v, 14); or: "Be of good heart, my daughter, your faith has helped you. Go in peace and be healed of your sickness"; or: "Return to thy house, and tell how great things God has done to thee" (Luke viii, 39); or: "Neither will I condemn thee; go, and sin no more" (John viii, 11).

Behold the love and compassion contained in these words! They do not cast down and make disconsolate. They are as balsam in an open wound.

### 26. *The Call of Matthew*

"And He saw Levi, son of Alphaeus, sitting in the counting-house, and He saith to him: Follow me! And he arose and followed him" (Mark ii, 14; cfr. Matt. ix, 9; Luke v, 27).

1. *Extraordinary Vocations.* Even in our day, striking vocations are not unheard-of. A young man of affairs, with unusual business ability and a splendid future and exceptional opportunities, suddenly lays aside his career to follow the divine call. The transformation is no less striking and the circumstances differ little from the case of Levi.

Or it may be a woman of the world, with beauty,

wealth, and accomplishments, surrounded by an admiring group, who suddenly leaves her worldly paradise for the simple and austere life of the cloister, the school-room, or the hospital.

Behold the mysterious workings of the divine calling! Even to-day, the Master calls His apostles, His chosen ones, from the salon, the mansion, the office, the professions. Suddenly His footstep approaches; He calls, and another Levi comes to intimate fellowship with Him.

2. *Postponed Vocations.* Levi may be said to have had a delayed vocation. He brings into the apostolic school wisdom of years, experience, and an intellectual training which fits him for the task of evangelical authorship. These delayed vocations, which are not infrequent, have brought to the Church many remarkable men. Many even now walk the highways and byways who feel the call to a higher life and need but a word of encouragement to arise and follow Jesus. Such should be sought, aroused, and encouraged.

### 27. *Participating in Public Functions—Clerical Seclusion*

Levi prepared a sumptuous meal for Him in his house, and there were many tax collectors there as well as others, who sat at table with Him. (Luke v, 29; cfr. Matt. ix, 9 sq.; Mark ii, 14 sq.)

1. This dinner gives evidence of Levi's influential position. The whole world of finance is represented, publican and sinner, and —according to the pharisaical



inventory—a few orthodox. All in all a rather unseemly gathering; and yet Christ joins them in comradeship and good cheer.

2. That class of clerics who cannot sufficiently preach seclusion from the world and persist in finding their priestly ideal only among these, cannot confirm their belief by pointing to the Divine Example. Christ is not of the world, but labors in and for the world. He enters the homes of the poor as well as the mansions of the rich and does not confine Himself to the pious or the orthodox, but accepts invitations from unbelievers—we would say, Liberals—and dines with publicans and sinners. Does the divine command: “Do as I have done” lose its force in this instance? Aloofness but sharpens the edge of suspicion, intercourse dulls it.

But even to-day, how many hyper-critical voices would be raised to say: “What is the Master doing among publicans and sinners?”

The divine answer runs: “Not the healthy but the sick are in need of doctors.” Go and learn the meaning of the words: “I desire compassion, not sacrificial offerings! I have not come to call the just, but the sinners to repentance.”

3. Here then, is the divine admonition: “Not the healthy but the sick.” Is your practice in accord with this? Or are you satisfied with a sheepfold made up of a few pious elderly ladies and gentlemen and a scattering of children? To be sure, such as these demand little worry and less labor. But the publicans and sinners, our modern Liberals, indifferentists,

non-church goers—what of these? Are they forgotten, neglected, shunned? To keep aloof from them may be the least troublesome way, but it is not in accord with the example of the Master.

“Not the healthy but the sick need attention.”

The story is told of an unmarried elderly gentleman, a man of the world and its affairs, who was a typical, non-church-going modern, sufficient unto himself, living respectably, even admirably according to the world's standards. The local pastor felt the barrier that existed between them, but had never essayed to break through it. At last a particularly favorable opportunity arose. The pastor approached Mr. Worldly Man, gained an audience, and had an interview with him. When he had finished, he was surprised to hear the reply: “Reverend Sir, I have waited for this word from you for some time. I would be pleased to have you call again and give me your advice.” This actual occurrence proves that the seemingly impenetrable worldliness with which so many envelop themselves, is sometimes only skin-deep and easily pierced. A judicious, well-timed zeal, with God's help, can accomplish much.

## 28. *Master and Disciples—Pastors and Assistants*

“But the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying to His disciples: Why do you eat and drink with publicans and sinners?” (Luke v, 30).

1. These gentlemen avoid a clash with the Master, whose perspicacity and ability at repartee they know

only too well. Instead, they approach the disciples, whose unsophistication would lead them into entanglements. But the Master guards them closely. He comes to their defense and victoriously leads them through their difficulties.

Is not this an example for you, Reverend Pastor, to protect and help your assistants, that they may avoid the pitfalls and dangers of youth and inexperience?

2. As well, too, an example for the relationship between the older and younger clergy. What affection and confidence exist between the Master and His disciples! He towers above them, and yet how graciously He condescends to their weaknesses, with what fine nonchalance He overlooks their errors and defects! He exhorts, advises, corrects, but without the least tinge of bitterness or superiority. He guides them in their vocation and gives them an adequate training before sending them forth. He shares with them His powers, even His miraculous powers. He rejoices with them in their accomplishments.

"Have you ever wanted for anything?" He asks them at the close of His earthly sojourn, and they are forced to answer, "Nothing, Lord." How befitting is this relationship! What a splendid example Christ here gives to pastors and their assistants!

3. How far-reaching may be the impressions and lessons of the first year of an assistant's priestly career! How fortunate is he if his mentor in these years is like unto the divine Model!

29. *Bethsaida and the Confessional*

“An angel of the Lord descended at certain times into the pond, and the water was moved.” (John v, 4).

The story of the pool of Bethsaida recalls the Bethsaida of the New Testament, the Sacrament of Penance. Round about this well of healing waters waits a great multitude of sick, lame, and blind, for the stirring of the waters.

And you, priest of God, are the angel who descends from time to time to move the waters of grace.

Not until you arrive, is the water moved. But then the saving streams of grace flow more freely than those of Bethsaida in the Old Dispensation.

All who descend into the cleansing stream find health and vigor,—not merely the first, as in the days of old. But now, as then, the flow of grace depends upon the descent of the angel.

There have been times and periods in the history of the Church when confessionals were as little used as the waters of Bethsaida. They were covered with dust and cob-webs and in some places had actually come to be used for storage purposes! But, thank God, these days are past, and our confessionals are crowded.

Yet, how inapproachable some of them are made! After the poor penitent has waited long hours, he is greeted in a harsh and forbidding manner. Truly, there are confessionals and confessionals: here a blessed Bethsaida, there a heartless chamber of tortures!

30. *The Invalid of Thirty-eight Years—Neglected  
Children of the Church*

“Sir, I have no man” (John v, 7).

A most important pastoral regulation shines forth in these stirring words.

1. In every city and hamlet there are invalids, spiritual invalids, who have been neglected, deserted, forgotten. They long for help and consolation, but they “have no man.” The invalid of thirty-eight years would perhaps have lingered on without attention for many years more, had not our Lord sought him out and befriended him.

2. Few pastors are unwilling to give their help to unfortunates, seeking aid, but how little effort is put forth to find the invalids, in their squalor and misery, in their neglected haunts and corners. And yet, how many have waited in vain for your ministrations! They have not the courage to go to you, to take the first step, to have you called. But they long for a human being who will reach out his hand and help them into the waters of salvation.

3. A pastor of souls who is prepared to assist only when asked and approached, does but half his duty. The good shepherd seeks his wandering sheep, no matter how great an effort may be necessary to find them.

They will not come of their own accord because they are unwilling or unable. For the blight of sin is sickness, impotency, and reticence. If the invalid finds no one to come to him, he is lost.

### 31. *The Journey Through the Fields—Apostolic Expeditions*

1. "At that time Jesus went through the corn on the sabbath" (Matt. xii, 1; cfr. Luke vi, 1 sqq; Mark ii, 23 sqq.).

This pen-sketch pictures for us the apostolic journeyings of Christ and His disciples over hill and down dale, through fields and meadows, along wooded paths and by brook and stream, just as you, perhaps, travel about in caring for your missions and administering to your scattered flock. And if on these journeyings the path occasionally becomes hard and forbidding, recall the example of the Master. Recollecting the dusty roads and stony paths encountered for our sake by the Good Shepherd, the Church sings: "*Quaerens me sedisti lassus.*"

2. And the disciples became hungry.

From the Bible narrative it is plain that, taken by and large, our Lord and His disciples suffered little actual want of food on their apostolic journeyings. Oriental hospitality and the ministrations of pious women and good friends provided for their necessities. And yet there is no doubt that the occasion frequently arose when the Pauline "*Scio satiari et esurire, abundari et penuriam pati*" was realized. Of our Lord, too, it is frequently stated that He suffered hunger and thirst. His reward for a cup of cold water—in the sweltering heat of Palestine a most welcome refreshment—is, indeed, significant. "Whosoever shall give you to drink a cup of water in

my name, because you belong to Christ: Amen I say to you, he shall not lose his reward" (Mark ix, 40).

In the missions of our country these words take on an added meaning. On the far western prairies, in the deserts and on mountains, valiant missionaries to this day know the pangs of hunger and the agony of thirst. What with long weeks of slow travel, nights spent under God's open sky, and days without a morsel of prepared food—missionaries even in this country of ours know the meaning of the gospel words: "And the disciples hungered."

### 32. *The Sermon on the Mount.—Apostolic Vocations*

"When Jesus saw the multitudes, He went up into a mountain and . . . opening His mouth, He taught them." (Matt. v, 1 sqq).

This incomparable scene of the Sermon on the Mount shows among other things (1) the power of the Master and (2) the reason for this power.

1. Behold the church! The vault of heaven for a roof, the hills and mountains as supporting columns; and below stretches the broad prairie, the beautiful valley, and the lovely Sea of Genesareth!

Behold the congregation! A numberless multitude from Galilee and Decapolis, from Judea and Jerusalem, from the far side of Jordan, even from Tyre and Sidon—ten to twenty thousand souls.

Picture the view from the hillside out upon the



swaying multitude, whose eyes and hearts are fixed on one point, the divine Teacher of men.

Surely the Apostles were impressed with the magnitude of their vocation.

2. What is it that attracts the multitudes? "Who were come to hear Him, and to be healed of their diseases." (Luke vi, 18)

Is it clear, then, why they came, what they sought and expected?

They desired to hear, to be taught and instructed.

They would hear the beautiful parables, the incomparable sermons of our Lord, which so aptly explain the mysteries of God. Does not preaching mean spreading the word of God down through the centuries to each generation? "Go and teach what I have taught you."

They desire health, compassion, relief from disease and suffering.

Pray, let them not depart unsatisfied.

### 33. *The Magnetism of the Master—of the Priest*

All "sought to touch Him, for virtue went out from Him and healed all." (Luke vi, 19).

1. This explains the power of the Divine Master, who drew all men to Himself.

What is the explanation of this wonderful power? His appearance, His words, His miracles, all show that He is not of this earth, but that an other-worldly power courses through His being. In short, it is the

supernatural, the divine prerogative that encompasses Him.

2. A reflection of this power shines forth in every look, gesture, demeanor, word, work and act of the true priest. His whole being and personality radiate it. It is like the soft aroma of flowers or the peaceful glimmer of a star in the depth of night. No one but feels it and no one departs without being the better for it.

And when death has closed the eyes of such a priest, there is but one sentiment in the hearts and on the lips of all: "He was a good, a zealous, a Christ-like priest." And as His flock beholds Him for the last time, it stoops to kiss the hand that was so frequently raised to bless.

All "sought to touch him, for virtue went out from Him."

34. *The Leitmotiv of the Sermon—"Blessed are the Poor . . ."*  
(Matt. v, 1 sqq)

1. Encouragement, eternal reward, that is the spirit, the *leitmotiv* of the Sermon on the Mount: "blessed," the word of consolation, is its ever recurring refrain.

Now and then Jesus hurls forth a condemnation or reproach, but infrequently, and then only against a certain well-known class destitute of love. We recall Him oftener instilling hope and encouragement. He is truly the Prince of Peace.

2. As a priest of God, are you also an angel of peace, joy, and hope—or are you a messenger of gloom and dejection?

Gazing upon you are faces lined with care and anxiety; life's strenuous battle has left its indelible impress on them. Truly, weakness and sinfulness are there as well, but they come to you full of hope and good will. Were the people who followed our Lord better, more religious? How do you deal with those who come to you, in manner, word and action? Do you perhaps spread gloom instead of encouragement? Do you pour into wounded hearts vinegar instead of oil and wine? Do you cast men into the depths of dejection instead of carrying them to the heights of consolation?

Your people return with heavy hearts, little thinking of praising God and His works. How otherwise with the crowds that followed our Lord!

3. Blessed! O heavenly word, which touches new well-springs in the hearts of men, which calls forth new life and energies and raises man to greater heights of endeavor and achievement! Let it be your magic word, to enchant your followers, and if occasionally the battle-cry must needs be sounded to arouse the laggards, call in a strange priest.

### 35. *The Light of the World—The Clerical Sun* (Matt. v, 14)

1. The sun, the source of light and physical life, is

a true picture of the Saviour of the world as well as a striking representation of an energetic, zealous priestly life.

Day after day this source of light and life rises in the heavens to dispense his blessings; quiet and serene in his rising, almost unnoticed or taken for granted, at least until he lingers longer than usual behind a cloud.

Thus the priest brings light and heat, *i. e.*, consolation, joy, and cheer into the house of God, into the school, into the humblest cottage. Wherever he goes there is life-giving light!

Children wax strong in the light and warmth of his presence, the aged linger in its quickening rays. It dispells the dark clouds of care and sorrow, and brings joy into the sick-room.

2. And when this sun sinks into the ocean of eternity, every house and heart in the parish is filled with sorrow. A sun has sunk, a warm, beautiful sun. His sorrowing people follow him to the grave, which has become a hallowed tomb. Would that our lives were like such a sun!

### 36. *The City on a Mountain—Exalted Position of the Priest*

"A city seated on a mountain cannot be hid." (Matt. v, 14).

1. "A city on a mountain." The priest is raised above the plains of the lay-world. He is truly a "city on a mountain," visible to all, looked up to and re-

spected by all, a source of advice, consolation, and help.

2. "Cannot be hid." This explains the immensity of the scandal when a priest becomes unworthy of his calling. Fingers of scorn are pointed at him and the lamentations of Jeremias over the desolation of the holy places re-echo in his ears. *Ecce civitas!* "All they that passed by the way have clapped their hands at thee: . . . they have hissed and wagged their heads at the daughter of Jerusalem, saying: Is this the city of perfect beauty, the joy of all the earth?" (Lamentations ii, 15).

### 37. *The Merchant of Capharnaum—The Officer and the Soldiers*

(Luke vii, 1 sqq.; Matt. viii, 1-5 sqq.).

1. Is there not a centurion in your parish, a public official, a business man, an influential man-of-affairs, who, though professing another belief, yet leads an upright, God-fearing life? Have you made his acquaintance, or do you merely know of him? The Master, according to the example He presents us in this incident, would approach him and include him among His friends.

There is little difficulty in this. Both you and he are respected in the community and move on the same social plane. Our Lord's gracious praise of the centurion before the multitudes in the streets of Capharnaum was undoubtedly most welcome. With what joy did the centurion hear the words from the divine

lips: "Amen, I say to you, I have not found so great faith even in Israel." Who can doubt but that from that moment he was a friend of the Master and a faithful follower of Him?

2. Our Lord not infrequently, as we see in the Gospel, approaches a man whose position in society gives him considerable influence over the people. It is noteworthy, in this connection, that some of the greatest reformer saints in the Church's history were ever diligent to obtain the favor, if not the conversion, of those whose power over the people would tend either to make or to mar success in their work for the salvation of souls.

3. The Church has taken up the cry of the centurion, and at all times and in all places is heard, in the most solemn of moments: "*Domine, non sum dignus.*" A jewel that she picked up in the streets of Capharnaum! And wherefrom, from bishop, priest, or holy religious? No, from the lips of the centurion, who fell upon his knees in humble, loving faith!

### 38. *The Patriotism of Christ—of the Priest*

"And when they came to Jesus, they besought him earnestly, saying to Him: He is worthy that thou shouldest do this for him. For he loveth our nation; and he hath built us a synagogue" (Luke vii, 4 sq.).

Here we have the Jews of Capharnaum appealing to the patriotism of our Lord. "He loves our people"; therefore the Master is asked to help.

1. The question that naturally arises is, did Christ love His country? As far as history records, all people at all times have held sacred the name of fatherland; even degenerate nations have not been known to renounce it. This love of country runs through the Davidic Psalms, which the Master prayed, as well as through the Magnificat of His blessed Mother; "*Suscepit Israel, puerum suum.*"

Without a doubt our Lord loved His people and their little country, with its hills and plains, its rivers and lakes, and its historic spots. But He burst the bands of narrow Jewish nationalism. The Church which He founded was to be a spiritual empire, extending to all lands, restricted and dominated by none. Even in the lowly stable of Bethlehem our Lord drew to Himself royal personages out of the East.

His teachings are universal in extent and application, they are for all times and all peoples. Christ stands far above individualism, whether in men or in nations. He is the only true universalist.

But all this in no way excludes a reasonable love of country.

2. In what manner does our Lord manifest His patriotism? His entire life was spent in the service of His countrymen, and within the confines of His little nation, He was pleased to spend His earthly days. He subjected Himself to all its laws and customs, though He was their author and designer. He was circumcised and, through His blessed Mother, He obeyed the decree of enrollment, the law of purification, and the precept of annual pilgrimage to the



Temple. He is part of the Jewish nation, participates in all its feasts, conforms to its language, customs, and conventions, and celebrates its national heroes,—Abraham, Moses, Solomon, David, Elias, etc., etc.

He speaks condescendingly to the Samaritan woman, but makes it clear that salvation comes from the Jews (John iv, 22). He speaks of the “sheep of the House of Israel,” the “children at the table of the Father” (Matt. xv, 24, 26), to whom He is sent primarily.

His heart goes out to his people, He rejoices in their greatness, and laments their degeneration. He sorrows for Israel’s future (Luke x, 12 sqq., xiii, 28 sqq.; Mark xii, 1 sqq.) and weeps at the blindness of Jerusalem (Luke xix, 41 sqq.)

What a picture of love of home and country is presented before us as we see our Lord viewing the City and its magnificent temple from the Mount of Olives. As He looked into the future and saw the destruction of this wonderful city, He wept bitterly, so deeply did its downfall move Him. (Luke ix, 40).

And how dear to the heart of every lover of Christ is the “Holy Land,” this mundane country of our Lord. It is His land, His country, His home, the scene of His miracles and blessed life.

3. Here is a model for the priest. If his patriotism is fashioned after that of the Master, he will be a true lover of his country, its history, development, and future. He will take an intelligent interest in its welfare and shun all excesses of national pride (chauvinism); he will shun the Scylla of reactionary con-

servatism as well as the Charybdis of destructive radicalism.

It is but natural that his heart should go out in fuller measure to his own people, among whom he labors, to whom he is so intimately bound by ties of tongue and national custom. But thus far and no farther. His catholicity includes all people, his zeal recognizes no barrier. All men are Christ's brothers, and for the priest of God this is sufficient.

39. *The Young Man of Naim—The Priest at the Death-Bed*

(Luke vii, 11-17)

1. How often death disrupts a joyful family circle or lays waste a household, in which joy and happiness previously reigned!

Perhaps the father is taken, or the children are robbed of their beloved mother, about whose grave they weep, inconsolably. Or an infant is snatched from its mother's breast.

In the biblical narrative we are told of the death of the only son of a widowed mother. She had placed all her hopes in him and had labored and planned for his future long days and nights.

And now, in a moment, Death has disrupted all. Her son lies dead, and broken-heartedly she follows him to the grave. Her sorrow is boundless. Rather, far rather would she have taken his place, for her sun has set forever, and her life is a bleak and dreary waste.

2. You, too, dear Pastor, undoubtedly have such sor-

rowing hearts in your parish—fathers and mothers who have buried their beloved in anguish and desolation.

Be their help and consolation. Your Divine Master has given you an example: "When the Lord saw her, He was moved with pity and said: Weep not!"

Compassion is truly a balsam which assuages the pain of bereavement and dulls the poignant edge of sorrow.

Wealth, honors, and earthly possessions are no source of comfort to the bereaved. They look for consolation to one who carries an other-worldly message; they look to you as a priest of God, who can dispense the supernatural treasures of holy religion.

"Weep not." Who can measure the depths of divine mercy revealed in these words? Who can measure the compassion of Christ as He looked upon the widow of Naim and comforted her in her distress?

Your merciful ministrations as pastor must be a reflection of the love of Christ's Sacred Heart.

3. "Young man, I say to you, arise." Our Lord tempers His power with love. He can heal with one word, the deepest wounds and obliterate the greatest losses.

We possess no such power. Death is our master, before whom we stand helpless. And yet our Lord makes it clear that no cost is too great to bring comfort to a broken heart. His mercy and compassion are shown to us in a heroic measure.

4. "Jesus gave him to his mother."

Yes, there is a death over which God's priests are

given dominion. On the feast of St. Monica the Church reads the gospel of the miracle at Naim. There is scarcely a parish in which a Monica does not weep for her Augustine. What is greater than bringing back a long-lost son? To reconcile and reunite mother and child, husband and wife, father and son, are, surely, among the greatest triumphs of a zealous priestly career.

#### 40. *The Religion of the Poor—The Church and the Care of the Poor*

I. The new message reads: "The poor have the Gospel preached to them." (Matt. xi, 5).

The mission of St. John the Baptist was to give testimony to Jesus. Our Lord simply refers to the Old Testament as a prophetic, messianic picture, which has been exactly realized in Him. (Is. xxxv, 5; lxi. 1).

One characteristic of this picture is particularly noteworthy. "The poor have the Gospel preached to them." How exact the counterpart in the life of our Lord! His words announced a complete reversal of the old order. "Blessed are the poor."

Our Lord has lifted the disgrace from poverty. He has made His religion one of compassion and mercy. Little wonder that Nietzsche, with his philosophy and ethics of the "Superman," derided Christianity. According to this code, only the élite, the supermen, have a right to exist. To pity the weak is a sign of weakness.

The divine code is brief and succinct: "Blessed are the poor . . ."; "Come to me all ye who are weary. . . ."; "the poor have the gospel preached to them."

2. Christ left this special love for the poor as a priceless legacy to His Church. And if the history of the Church tells us of localities where her influence upon the lives of the people was lost, this was the result, primarily, of a neglect of the divine command to minister to the poor and lowly, to be solicitous for the welfare of the masses, rather than paying homage to the great ones of this world.

Nothing alienates the common people so easily from the Church as a realization that her influence and spirit are used to further social injustice.

#### 41. *Character-Sketch of The Baptist*

"What went you out into the desert to see? a reed shaken with the wind?" (Matt. xi, 7 sq.)

Behold Christ's characterization of a man and an apostle after his own heart.

What is the first praise Christ bestows upon the Precursor?

1. It is, stability of character. That man out there in the desert, he says, is no "reed shaken with the wind."

The priest of God, too, must be true to his principles, unmoved by popular favor or disfavor, unawed by official pleasure or displeasure, and unbribed by any temptation to personal gain or popularity.

2. The second characteristic which our Lord extols in St. John is Apostolic simplicity. That man in the desert was not "clothed in soft garments." He was not surrounded with luxury and comforts like the rich in their palatial homes.

To be sure the priest need not be an anchorite or a monk, wearing a hair shirt. Neither was Christ our Lord. On the other hand, he must not be a pampered worldling, given to the flesh and its desires. What immeasurable harm has come to the Church through the scandals given by a worldly clergy!

3. Here again our Lord presents to his priests a beautiful lesson.

"*Magis,*" writes Ludophus, "*voluit commendare Ioannem in absentia discipulorum eius, quam in prae-sentia.*"

What is the spirit of clerical gatherings? Are not mutual pleasantries and praises often made to "hint a fault and hesitate dislike"? That should not be.

#### 42. *The Inconsistency of Unbelief—Impossibility of Giving Universal Satisfaction*

"For John came neither eating nor drinking; and they say: He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say: Behold a man that is a glutton and a wine drinker, a friend of publicans and sinners." (Matt. xi, 18 sq.)

1. Our Lord here points the apt comparison of the caprice of the children in the market-place to score against the unreasoning criticism of the Pharisees and

doctors. When the Church insists on the demands of Christian morality, she is decried as intolerant; when she fashions her unchangeable moral code to the realities of life, she is charged with temporizing and duplicity.

Likewise the pastor. If he unflinchingly pursues his duties, he is denounced as a martinet; if he proceeds with humane leisure, he is decried as lax and easy-going. No priest can ever make himself universally agreeable. Be consoled, therefore, by the example of the Master, who was incessantly misunderstood and misjudged.

2. The busy pastor may draw much consolation from this incident in the career of our Lord, whose rule of life is diametrically opposed to that of St. John the Baptist. He came to be all things to all men. He could not, therefore, live so as to repel those whom He wished to save.

He came to be an exemplar to all men in all ages and walks of life, to the layman as well as the cleric, whether secular or regular. He is the great High Priest, the divine model for all clerics, and yet He did not live the life of a recluse.

#### 43. *With Simon the Pharisee—The Art of Censuring*

"Simon, I have somewhat to say to thee. But he said: Master say it." (Luke vii, 40.)

I. *The Critique.*—"This man, if he were a prophet,"



whispers the host to his guests, "would surely know who and what manner of a woman this is that toucheth him,—that she is a sinner."

This is typical of those superficial judgments so often given concerning the Church and her priests. Perhaps such criticism comes to the ears of the priest, just as it did to those of our Lord. To be silent, were to assent to it or to condemn oneself as cowardly. A rebuke is clearly in order. But it must be administered in such a way as to achieve its end—and this is an art of which Our Lord gives us an incomparable example.

2. *The Rebuke*.—Our Lord proposes to point out to the critic his errors and to impress upon the proud Pharisee his blunt and tactless manner. Without giving offense, He sets him right. He then obtains a hearing from His host.

"Simon, I have somewhat to say to thee." . . .  
 "Master, say it."

Then follows the parable of the two debtors, Simon's concurrence, and finally the brilliant comparison between the contrition of the sinful woman and the self-righteousness of the Pharisees.

Here in the midst of a little group of guests is enacted a drama in which Christ is the director. The guests themselves play the parts. The dénouement is swift in unfolding and at the end each actor finds that he has worked out his own fate. Thus the sting is lacking.

Truly this is a classical example of a most difficult art, deftly manipulated.

44. *Women as Disciples of Christ—Female Attendants in the Rectory*  
(Luke viii, 1-3)

“And it came to pass afterwards, that He travelled through the cities and towns, preaching and evangelizing the kingdom of God; and the twelve with Him: and certain women . . . Mary . . . Joanna . . . Susanna . . . ”

1. *The Holy Women*.—It was in the nature of things that women should be among the followers of Christ. And fortunately so. Our Lord and His disciples could not be entirely dependent upon the hospitality of the neighboring people. These women, therefore, performed a valuable and necessary service to our Lord. They constituted the first organisation of women in the service of the Apostolic Church.

There was a fine fitness in it all. These women took no part in the activities of the Apostolic teaching body, but felt themselves richly rewarded with the opportunity to minister in such wise as to further the grand work of saving souls, and thus to be in close communion with our Lord, who favored them with His divine presence and words, as He did in Bethania.

2. *Women in the Rectory*.—Likewise there is an important and necessary place in the pastoral residence for women. Their's are the household duties to perform. But there must be the same separation of activities as in the Apostolic teaching body. House-keepers and their servants care for the physical needs and comforts of the inmates of the rectory, and nothing more. Here their duties end and likewise their activ-

ities and influence. Though charity demands an easy, unaffected relationship among all members of the pastoral residence, yet, for obvious reasons, the world should know it as the "priest's house." The idea that should at all times be uppermost in the minds of the parishioners and others is, that the rectory is a place where priests reside and exercise their influence, where sacred confidences may be exchanged and priestly advice sought in perfect privacy. Anything else would be unbecoming the reverence and esteem in which a priest of God is held. Anything other than this may lead to gossip and even scandal-mongering.

3. *An Unsullied Reputation*.—It is noteworthy that in spite of the criticism of the Pharisees, no one ever impugned the character of Jesus. His very presence gave evidence of an irreproachable and divinely exalted morality.

The priest, too, must not only shun all evil, but even the shadow and appearance of evil. There must be a certain measured reserve in his dealings with all, particularly with his women parishioners.

It is related of our Lord that He cured women of diseases, exorcised those possessed of evil spirits, and even drove the devil from them. Other services were distinctly in the nature of a pastoral duty: He consoled a poor widow, healed an aged mother, and cared for a poor sinner. Thus He has left us a splendid example of this class of pastoral duties.

#### 45. *The Besieging Multitudes—Then and Now*

"And they come to a house, and the multitude

cometh together again, so that they [the Master and His disciples] could not so much as eat bread." (Mark iii, 20.).

1. Can you not recall similar instances in your own life as a priest and pastor?

Indeed, you are frequently called upon to make great physical sacrifices. It is not uncommon that the earliest refreshment of any kind on Sunday is taken at high noon. And then, perhaps, the long fast has brought on a severe headache, if not more serious physical disorders.

Missions, retreats, and special occasions exact even greater sacrifices. From early morning till late at night it is necessary to attend to the most exacting duties. How refreshing it would be to leave the cramped and stuffy quarters of the confessional, if only for a few minutes! But the people press on, row after row, standing in line for hours, awaiting their turn to make peace with God. Enough! No matter what the sacrifice, you must remain to serve those whom He spurns not.

2. It is consoling, at such times, to look up to the Master, whose life did not lack just such trying instances.

He was not of those who considered comforts first and strove to obtain the maximum of physical well-being for Himself, but said: "It is my meat to do the will of Him who sent me, to perfect His work."

#### 46. *Brethren of Jesus—Meddlesome Relatives*

"And when His friends had heard of it, they went

out to lay hold on him. For they said: He is become mad." (Mark. iii, 21, 31 sqq.).

1. There is reference here to Christ's kinsfolk. His mother accompanies them, not because she shares their views, but rather because she is concerned about their attitude towards Him.

The whole incident is a disgusting commentary on the extreme provincialism and ingrown intellectuality of these people. They had witnessed the quiet, hidden life of our Lord and were unable to square with this His public life, full of miracles and supernatural wonders.

It is possible that their motive was sincere. They may have feared for His fate at the hands of the Sanhedrim, whose displeasure He was incurring. At any rate, they considered their interference justified.

2. Our Lord gently and graciously declined their unbidden proffer of aid.

He was at one time one of them, sharing their provincial life and customs, willingly subjecting Himself to its demands and duties. But this was only one small corner of the scene of His activities. His mission was to all peoples of the world, to whom He was come with the new Gospel of Truth. In what manner, then, could the interference of relatives be tolerated? To Him all men were brothers, for whose salvation He was establishing His Church.

The application to the life of the priest is obvious. Serious consequences may follow from undue interference by relatives in a cleric's life.

Though charity demands an affectionate relation-

ship between a priest and His immediate kinsfolk, yet there can be no question but that his great work demands a complete separation and absolute independence in all affairs of life. Anything other than this is, to say the least, a degradation of his sacred office and, at worst, a cause of serious difficulties and scandals. His every effort belongs to a new, a larger family, to Christ's Church on earth. To this all else must be secondary.

And Jesus said: "Who is my mother and my brethren? And looking round about on them who sat about Him, He saith: Behold my mother and my brethren."

#### 47. *The Parable of the Sower—Pastoral Cares and Problems*

(Luke viii, 4 sqq.; Mark iv, 1 sqq.; Matt xiii, 1 sqq.)

1. To what end all these pastoral efforts? *Cui bono?* Where is the fruit of this incessant labor? Such thoughts and questionings are natural at times in the lives of priests and missionaries.

Behold Christ, our leader, in the midst of His children, teaching and exhorting them. He looks out over the great multitude and visions the sowers who will come after Him, through all the ages. "Be of good heart," He pleads with them in the beautiful parable addressed to them. "Even though a small return be yours for your efforts in sowing the seed, do not slacken your pace. Your labor is not in vain."

2. *The Responsibility of the Husbandman.*—Hus-

bandry is an art that requires knowledge and craftsmanship. Modern methods and science have done much to increase the yield. Is it not possible that our antiquated methods are unsuited to the new conditions and out of step with the findings of science? Do we understand thoroughly the ground, the seed, and the best methods of sowing?

Spiritual is like material tilling, subject to fossilization in methods and technique. The advances in the related sciences must be utilized to advantage in the work for the salvation of souls.

48. *The "Mystery of the Kingdom of Heaven"*  
— *A Privilege of the Priesthood*

1. "To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven." (Matt. xiii, 11).

To you, apostles and priests, it is given to understand the mysteries of God, the great truths of faith, and, hence, it were inexcusable should you see these mysteries as through a glass darkly.

2. To the others, however, "it is not given." It is but natural that a priest should bring to these spiritual problems a more penetrating vision. His previous training, his daily meditation, his intimate relationship with Christ, clarifies his vision and illumines his understanding.

Indeed, it were a pity if this were not the case. Is it right or fitting that, as a rule, the simple, unlettered members of the flock should have a keener perception of these mysteries than the shepherd and the leader?



3. "He who has, to him shall be given, that he might have in abundance; and he who has not, from him shall be taken that which he has."

Here is expressed an unusual principle in the divine economy of grace, which is apt to encourage many a priestly heart.

Was there not a time when you had an abundance, an over-abundance, of heavenly treasures and interior consolations and supernatural light? Were not the joyful, care-free years of the seminary and the first years thereafter, just such years?

And if now it is otherwise, and you suffer from a cold apathy or even disgust, what is the reason? He who allows himself to grow tepid and lukewarm, from him will be taken the little he has.

#### 49. *The Seed and the Growing Plant*

"So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the earth, and should sleep, and rise, night and day, and the seed should spring, and grow up whilst he knoweth not. For the earth of itself bringeth forth fruit, first the blade, then the ear, afterwards the full corn in the ear." (Mark iv, 26 sqq.).

1. Our Lord has a liking for the example of the seed. There is mystery in its life and development. Who can fathom it? It is carried on the wings of the wind, whither no man knows. Apparently it is lost! But lo! if borne to rich soil, it passes through a strange and mysterious evolution into a marvellous tree. And from that tree comes a forest wonderful to behold!

2. Thus it may be with a word of yours spoken to an unnoticed, forgotten soul. It germinates, bursts forth from its hidden cranny, and bears fruit. Long years afterwards the story comes to you: "Do you remember such and such a time, when you spoke thus? It was at that time that I had a change of heart." Oh! the mystery of the grace of God!

50. *The Cockle in the Wheat—Battle with Renegades*  
(Matt. xiii, 24 sqq.)

This parable depicts the war that the pastor must wage with wickedness and injustice.

1. *Before.*—It is obvious, of course, that every effort must be made to ward off evil, to keep eternal vigilance against it.

"While men were asleep, his enemy came and oversowed cockle among the wheat and went his way."

Sowing the seed is but one duty of the priest of God: he is set over his field to watch the harvest and to guard against the cockle.

Whence comes the cockle? One of the most destructive agents at work at present is the press, the great flood of erotic and sensual literature with which it is covering the land. There is a crying need for a chain of virile Catholic dailies and weeklies, periodicals, magazines and pamphlets. It is the sacred duty of every pastor to further the cause of the Christian press.

Perhaps the greatest destructive influence of our times is the unjust social and economic system under

which we are living. This pagan régime, sometimes called Capitalism, is inimical to every social good. It prostitutes our press and literature, commercializes education, makes the poor poorer and the rich richer and, finally, injects injustice into every vein of our social anatomy, so that a healthy body politic is impossible.

Every true priest of God may well stop to take inventory of his activities against this plague. Are not all other efforts, in some sense, futile, so long as our few good works are being daily swallowed up in a sea of social injustice?

This means a daily battle, not only to keep oneself from suffocation in this miasmatic atmosphere, but to give aid in a united effort to remove the causes of this malodorous thing. It means study, education, and conscientious leadership.

*"Fratres, sobrii estote et vigilate, quia adversarius vester diabolus circuit"* . . . thus the Church sounds her warning daily in the Breviary. Let us be up and doing, lest the enemy of our God and country overwhelm us.

2. *After.*—And then there is the battle after the cockle has appeared. The divine norm, in this regard, is based on the principle of the recognition of the freedom of the human will. Every effort must be made to lead this blind faculty in man. But the will remains free to choose good or evil under the false appearance of good. Compulsion is impossible with the will of man. Thus it is that we have ever to face the baffling and almost contradictory problem of evil.

“Wilt thou that we go and gather it up?”

“No,” comes the answer, “lest, perhaps, gathering up the cockle, you root up the wheat together with it.”

There is undoubtedly a satisfaction in imagining the western world to be wholly and undivided under the banner of Christ, in picturing the Catholic Church as the sole agent in heathen lands, in imagining our own surroundings given over to the life of the just.

“Wilt thou that we go and gather it up?”

There have been times in the history of the Church, when her warriors did not stop to ask questions, but in unreasoned haste went forth to conquer whole peoples by force and place them under Christ's sway. But to what good? Passing over a few isolated instances of divine sanction for the principle of force, history is eloquent in her testimony to the evils that follow the use of force in matters of religion. This is true, too, in the limited circles of the parish and the diocese. An intelligent and well directed programme of reform is far more effective than wild outbursts of an unregulated zeal.

### 51. *The Treasure of the Householder—Library and Study*

“Therefore every scribe instructed in the kingdom of Heaven, is like to a man that is a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure new things and old.” (Matt. xiii, 52.)

1. For the priest and pastor of souls this treasure is a well-trained mind, solid learning, and a library well stocked with useful books and periodicals.

Is this your treasure? Are you constantly enriching and embellishing it, or are you content with the meager stores laid up during your years at school? Such a treasure should be like a good savings account, constantly growing and doubling itself. There are new obligations to be met daily. Unless, then, you have taken this precaution, you cannot meet these demands. You are an intellectual bankrupt.

2. Ever new and ever old are the great truths of Christian philosophy. They are old but not out-of-date. The substance is the same, but the application differs. These times of democracy in education, an hourly press, universal and instantaneous communication, make tremendous demands upon the intellectual life of the Church and her leaders. Even "the man in the street" is no longer illiterate. The educated classes have so many opportunities that beckon to them from every quarter that it is but natural that they should be more critical of sermons and instructions. They expect, and rightly so, that this phase of the spiritual life keep step with the advances of the secular sciences, sociology, economics, history, etc. Upon priests and pastors falls the duty, therefore, of living a vigorous intellectual life, constantly enlarging, broadening, and developing their activities. The pulpit can become, in the true sense of the word, a University for the People.

52. *The Storm on the Sea*

(Luke viii, 22 sqq.; Mark iv, 35 sqq.; Matt. viii, 18 sqq.)

*A. Storms in the Life of the Priest*

It must have been an unusual storm that affected an old veteran like St. Peter.

And yet such are the storms in the life of the priest—the storms of the soul and of the flesh. An enervating ennui takes possession of the soul and all effort is futile. Hope has vanished. The innermost recesses of the soul are swept by the tempest. The worst has come. And in a despairing moment the soul cries out with Peter: “Master, doth it not concern Thee that we perish?”

Is He not concerned? Think back over your many past falls, your many weaknesses, falterings, and futilities, and through it all the evidences of His guiding and protecting hand. “And behold there was a great calm.”

*B. The Slumber of the Master and His Awakening*

1. The Lord sleeps. “And He was in the hinder part of the ship, sleeping upon a pillow.” (Mark iv, 38; cfr. Matt. viii, 24 sqq., Luke viii, 23).

Here again, quite characteristically, St. Mark gives us a more detailed picture than the other evangelists. Christ was in the stern of the little fishing boat, lying upon a pillow, which the solicitous hands of the disciples had placed there.

Could our Lord have shown His human nature more

obviously than in this incident? He sleeps! The storm rages and the little craft is tossed perilously from crest to trough, yet He, the omnipotent Creator, slumbers. What a sleep it must have been! His long journeyings and strenuous efforts with the slow, dull multitudes have brought on that strange, yet appealing, lassitude. How human! With what satisfaction may we poor mortals not look upon this bold exhibition of Christ's humanity!

Through all the ages, the Church's far-flung missionary lines have drawn consolation and courage from this scene. They have known the hardships of long journeys, the pangs of hunger and thirst, the burning sun, and the bitter cold.

The true spirit of the soldier of Christ has been expressed in fitting lines as follows:

My shoulders ache beneath my pack  
(Lie easier, cross, upon His back).  
I march with feet that burn and smart  
(Tread, Holy Feet, upon my heart).

Men shout at me who may not speak  
(They scourged Thy back and smote Thy cheek).  
I may not lift a hand to clear  
My eyes of salty drops that sear.

(Then shall my fickle soul forget  
Thy Agony of Bloody Sweat?)

My rifle hand is stiff and numb  
(From Thy pierced Palm red rivers come).  
Lord, Thou didst suffer more for me  
Than all the hosts of land and sea.

So let me render back again  
This millionth of Thy gift. Amen.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Prayer of a Soldier in France," by Joyce Kilmer. From "Joyce Kilmer," Vol. I, p. 109.



2. The Master awakens. "And they awake Him," "and rising up, He rebuked the wind, and said to the sea: "Peace, be still." (Mark iv, 38 sq.)

There is evident value in the portrayal of Christ's arising. It is no comatized procrastination. He steps forth with a freshness and a vigor that is in keeping with His immediate mastery over the elements.

There are occasional storms in every parish, when some poor unfortunate souls seem to cry out: "Lord, save us!" There is a sudden misfortune, a terrible tragedy. The priest is called to assist, to console, to encourage. How truly Christ-like is His presence if it has in it that mysterious element which seems to allay the ferocious tempest and bring peace to hearts and homes.

"And He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea: Peace, be still. And the wind ceased: And there was a great calm." (Mark iv, 39).

### 53. *Christ Casts Out a Devil—the Demon of Impurity*

(Luke viii, 26 sqq.; Mark v, 1 sqq.; Matt. viii, 28 sqq.)

"A certain man who had a devil now a very long time."

1. The unfortunate victim of the unclean spirit recalls to the experienced confessor the physical and spiritual havoc wrought by the sins of the flesh. Men and women, young men and young women, even those

scarcely more than children, become the prey of this unrelenting demon, who operates so effectively through the prevalent laxity of public morals, degraded amusements, lascivious literature, luxurious living, and the almost universal aversion for hard physical labor.

These unfortunates are victims of a consuming passion, which degrades them to the level of the beast and deprives them of all sense of honor and shame.

"And he wore no clothes, neither did he abide in a house, but in a sepulchre. . . . and no man could bind him not even with chains."

In this condition, the victim becomes a public danger, both physically and spiritually.

2. "What have I to do with thee?"

No sin more effectively seals the lips and heart than unchastity. An open and frank confession becomes a tremendous task. This leprosy of the soul forces its victims into a quarantine, away from the priest, the Church and all holy things. He is locked up in the whited sepulchre of his own unclean thoughts, desires, and companionships.

The disease is not only difficult of treatment, but of cure as well. Yet grace and God's unrelenting love are all-powerful. Calm and peaceful at heart, the unfortunate victim sits at the feet of the representative of Christ. What ineffable consolation for the priest to be conscious of exercising a healing power through the hands of God!

Even now miracles of grace are not impossible. But hope and faith in God's power are necessary.

54. *The Daughter of Jairus—Sudden Sick-Calls*  
 (Matt. ix, 18 sq., 23 sqq.; Mark v, 22 sqq.;  
 Luke viii, 41 sqq.)

1. This ruler had all the traditions of a class which, by its very position, was inimical to our Lord. And yet love of his own flesh and blood overcame this predisposition and he came to the divine Friend of children.

Humbly he falls at the feet of Christ and implores: "Lord, my daughter is even now dead; but come, lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live."

2. How frequently is this the experience of the priest. In the depths of the night the call comes from parent or child: "Come quickly, the beloved one lies at death's door." Perhaps the call comes from some unfrequented corner of the parish, from persons who are scarcely known to their pastor and who have recourse to him only at the last moment.

3. *Christ On a Sick-Call.*—Speedily and instantly He comes; willingly, with divine power and a heart all compassionate, He hurries to the sick-bed. Where seconds may be of incalculable value, it were tragic to loiter or delay.

"And Jesus rising up, went with him." Nor is that all. Our Lord consoles the distracted father: "Fear not, but have faith, and she shall live."

The district through which they passed knew little of the Messiah. He was a stranger in their midst. There was weeping and lamentation; all was in an uproar. Our Lord made his way through the crowd,

unheedful of their boorishness and even uncivility. He calmed them into an orderly group of mourners and brought peace to the anguished family.

They arrive at the bier. Christ touches her hand and says: "Talitha kumi" to the daughter lying in death, and lo! she arises and walks. The weeping and lamentation has been turned into glad rejoicing and open-mouthed wonder.

As a priest of God, you have undoubtedly had the great privilege of preparing a wandering soul for heaven, a greater miracle, by far, than the restoration of physical life.

55. *The Woman With the Bloody Issue—Scrupulous Persons*

(Matt, ix, 2, sqq.; Mark v, 25 sqq.; Luke viii, 43 sqq.)

1. This unfortunate victim of a debilitating disease had dragged out a miserable existence through twelve long weary years. Doctors had been consulted, but they were powerless.

There is a sapping disease of the spiritual life which is only too prevalent. Scruples are one of the greatest preventives of spiritual perfection in the pharmacopœia of the devil. Unfortunately many spiritual directors are unprepared to cope with this malady. The patient is sent along from one to another, in constant pain and anguish.

What a godsend is the priest who understands the disease and knows how to treat it!

2. "Be of good heart, daughter." Hear how the

Master speaks to this poor, despised woman! His words are full of sympathy and affection. How good she must have felt to be treated thus!

3. "And the woman was made whole from that hour." The scrupulous person leaves the confessional or instruction, "made whole from that hour."

### 56. *Apostolic Journeyings—Metropolitan Pastoral Care*

"And Jesus went about all the cities and towns, teaching in their synagogues. . . . and healing every disease, and every infirmity." (Matt. ix, 35).

1. Jesus wandered through Galilee, teaching, preaching, and healing. Let us not forget that this was a large territory, with undeveloped roads, an intemperate climate, and a broken terrain.

2. Now it is true that the care of souls is restricted to a comparatively small area. That is your Galilee, your Holy Land. But the parish associations, clubs, groups, organizations may be considered as the outlying points in which you are to carry on your work of evangelization.

3. In the parishes of our large cities, particularly the industrial communities with their floating population, their overcrowded masses of underpaid workmen and families, and the lack of all normal, human surroundings, the care of souls becomes a tremendous task.

"He went about, teaching, preaching, and healing."

The purely social has no place on such a programme.

Nor should it, though an occasional gathering in Bethania supplies pleasant interludes.

57. *Compassion for the People—A Flock Without a Shepherd*

“And seeing the multitudes, He had compassion on them, because they were distressed and lying like sheep that have no shepherd.” (Matt. ix, 36).

1. That is the impression Christ received as He wandered through His own country. Let us ask ourselves whether every flock has its shepherd or whether there are not to-day parishes to all effects without a pastor? Is there a shepherd over every flock, or rules there instead a martinet, a despot, an unyielding egotist, who has little love for his sheep, provides them with poor pastures? There are priests for whom pastoral duties never become a living reality, for whom the priesthood is the means to a career, a position, a quiet, peaceful, easy means of livelihood?

2. Pitiable the flock with such a shepherd! Every persecution is preceded by a lack of true priests of God. Are we entering such a period to-day? Is this locality a rich pasture for the sheep, with a loving watchful shepherd? Our Lord must have recalled the words of the Prophet: “Woe to the shepherds of Israel, that fed themselves: should not the flocks be fed by the shepherds? You ate the milk and clothed yourselves with the wool, and you killed that which was fat: but my flock you did not feed. The weak you have not strengthened, and that which was sick

you have not healed, that which was broken you have not bound up, and that which was driven away you have not brought again, neither have you sought that which was lost: but you ruled over them with rigor, and with a high hand. And my sheep were scattered, because there was no shepherd: and they became the prey of all the beasts of the field, and were scattered. My sheep have wandered in every mountain, and in every high hill: and my flocks were scattered upon the face of the earth, and there was none that sought them, there was none, I say, that sought them." (Ezechiel xxxiv, 2-6).

58. *The Harvest and the Laborers—Dearth of Priests*

"The harvest indeed is great, but the laborers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth laborers into his vineyard." (Matt. ix, 37 sq.)

I. These words of our Lord ring down through the ages, deploring, appealing, beseeching. In every land and every community there is need of workers.

Behold the harvest in India with its 300,000,000 souls and less priests than are found in an ordinary diocese in our own country! And then China, Japan, South America, the Philippines! Even in our own country there are districts which can be visited but once or twice a year. The heavenly visitation takes place, the *Lumen Christi* flames up only to die before another day comes. During the long months inter-



vening, the sick and dying are bereft of all spiritual succor.

The priest is the human channel through which all graces come to this arid earth. Without priests there can be no Christianity, no church, no tabernacle, no life-giving Sacraments. Throughout the world there are something like 370,000 priests, 300,000 of which are in Europe alone.

2. That is tragic; and yet more tragic still when an abundance of pastoral care produces little fruit, owing to the sloth or carelessness of the clergy.

There is a vast difference between the laborers in the Lord's vineyard. One labors zealously, incessantly and to good purpose; another idles through the days and years with little or no results. The one is a professional, the other a dilettante.

3. "Pray that the Lord . . . send forth laborers." To pray and to exhort to prayer for laborers in the vineyard of the Lord is commendable. Better still if the priest awakes vocations by his own example, his zeal, his love of his vocation. Much, very much can be done by sane and timely counsel. The young heart needs direction, training, gentle persuasion. How many vocations are lost for lack of this priestly care!

59. *The Victim of an Evil Woman*—"Où est la femme?"

(Matt. xiv, 1 sqq.; Mark vi, 14 sqq.; Luke ix, 7 sqq.)

1. The announcement of the bloody murder of St.

John the Baptist shows in a striking manner the potency of a zealous priestly life, if it is permissible to refer in this wise to the life of the Precursor. His fame penetrated the proud barriers of the palace, into the very heart of the royal adulterer. The life of heroism along the banks of the Jordan is discussed at the table of the King!

Herod had the disturber of his sinful life incarcerated, but he was forced to give him inward reverence and honor.

2. Herodias alone was John's bitter and unrelenting enemy. This sinful, proud woman was driven to enmity by the divergence of their standards. Such women, who hide a life of impurity under exterior elegance, physical beauty and charm, still exist.

To such as this the saintly penitent became a victim. With an unutterable aversion she led him to his fate, and when the blow came, she looked with more than satisfaction on the severed head of the Baptist.

3. St. John had triumphed. The Precursor of our Lord had presented an example which, if imitated, would obviate clerical scandal.

Beware of women! They are nearly always involved when the enemies of the Church gloat over a clerical scandal.

60. "*Venite Seorsum*"—*Yearly Retreats*  
(Mark vi, 31; Luke ix, 10)

1. The Apostles have completed their first preaching

tour. Their home-coming is filled with rejoicing for their treasured vocation and the results of their efforts for the salvation of souls.

"Nothing succeeds like success." The judgment of the world is based almost solely on tangible results. Though, in a sense, this is true also of spiritual work, yet it can easily be misinterpreted and become an incentive to an excessive "*effusio ad exteriora*."

The demand upon one's time for the fulfillment of a programme of this kind soon makes inroads upon the essentials of individual sanctification. Prayer is shortened and the soul is placed upon starvation rations. The spiritual life becomes anemic. Christ leads the way against this danger: "Come apart into a desert place and rest a little."

2. Regular respite becomes a necessity in the life of a priest. This is quite impossible for the pastor in the midst of his daily duties. He is forced to do as the disciples did when, at the bidding of the Master, they embarked and "went into a desert place apart."

The demands of daily routine dull the edge of our spiritual appreciation. It behooves us to withdraw from the stifling atmosphere of daily duties into a "desert place apart," into a cloister, a sanctuary of quiet and peace. Here the soul will again expand and receive in full measure God's graces. This is the purpose of the yearly retreats. *Venite seorsum et quiescite paululum.*

## 61. *The Impoverished Masses—Neglected Parishes*

"He had compassion on the multitudes, because they were distressed and lying like sheep that have no shepherd." (Matt. ix, 36.)

1. How beautifully Christ reveals for us, in these words, the love of His Sacred Heart. As He looks out from His point of vantage over the throngs of men, women, and children who have followed Him in spite of fatigue and hunger, His divine love goes out to them, and His Heart cries out: "I have compassion on them." He pities them in their hunger and lassitude, but above all He pities them in their spiritual destitution.

Again He has recourse to the picture of the fold without a shepherd. For the people and prophets of Israel, there was no more apt comparison. No other animal is so much in need of constant watchfulness as the sheep. It is lost through sickness or rape unless perpetually cared for.

2. Christ comes to your fold. He surveys your flock and takes note of its condition. Is there a joyful expression spreading over His countenance or is it lined with sorrow and dismay?

Do you hear Him say: "I have compassion on these sheep which have no shepherd?"

How fortunate the parish which has for its pastor a true shepherd, a shepherd according to the Heart of our divine Lord! Of such a one it has been said: "He took them all to him and spoke to them of the kingdom of God, taught them many things, and healed those who were sick."

62. *The Multiplication of the Loaves—Social Activity of the Church.*

(John vi, 2 sqq.; Luke ix, 11 sqq.; Mark vi, 33 sqq.; Matt. xiv, 13 sqq.)

1. The Apostles favor withdrawing from the crowd, expecting the people to scatter among the neighboring villages, there to find food and refreshments. But our Lord bids the Apostles, "give them to eat."

Their excuse that the supplies are insufficient for the numbers misses the mark. Prepare what you have and leave the rest to God.

Then, in the midst of what the Scriptures call a "desert," Christ prepares a repast for those who have followed him.

"Now there was much grass in the place."

And as our Lord arranged them in groups of fifty or a hundred men and women, with the children in the center, He bade them be seated. Then He took bread and fish and blessed them and gave to the disciples to distribute among the groups, "to each as much as he desired; and all ate and were satisfied."

And as our Lord beheld the multitude enjoying their simple fare, He was pleased. His Heart rejoiced that their physical needs were being cared for, and so He shows Himself to us in the light of practical charity.

2. Such, too, must be the light in which the priest appears to the people. He cannot actually multiply loaves, but he can multiply deeds of charity through his own efforts and those of his flock. Christ again leads the way. It is for us to follow.

“And they wanted to make Him king.”

The love and admiration of the people went out to their Benefactor and in their rashness they would have crowned Him king. The hearts of men have not changed. The Church, through her charitable work, exacts the administration of even her enemies. History records no more striking example of the loss of her influence than in those localities where she allied herself with the great ones of the world, to the neglect of the masses. Perhaps the lack of vital influence among our own people is the neglect of her traditional social principles, which would help to lead society away from the present injustices.

3. Landlordism in certain sections of India had exploited the people to the last farthing. A Jesuit missionary, P. Lievens, immediately upon arriving in Chota Nagpur, one of the strongholds of landlordism, took up the cudgels against the oppressor. Within a few short years he received 10,000 people into the Church. There are districts equally oppressed in our own country, without a liberator. Can there be a greater source of influence than this, through which the Church could reach the heart of the masses? What is more, we have the clear and unmistakable example of Christ, our Lord, for just this sort of activity.

### 63. *The Prayer of Our Lord— of The Priest*

“And having dismissed the multitude, He went into a mountain alone to pray.” (Matt. xiv, 23).

1. Again and again the Sacred Writings refer to the life of prayer which our Lord led.

Are your pastoral duties making inroads upon this duty, about which the Master was so assiduous? Do you withdraw, aside from the imposed obligation of the Breviary, for quiet meditation and prayer?

Your proximity to the house of God, to His tabernacle, breed laxity and a convenient nonchalance. Surely the working men and women of your parish do not find more time for visits than you do?

2. "I have no time."

A plausible, though overworked excuse. Christ, too, was strenuously engaged with His Father's business, but He made it His business to withdraw regularly for prayer and spiritual refreshment. He even took the hours of the night for this—so highly did He esteem it and so forcibly did He wish to impress it upon us. Surely, an occasional fifteen-minute retreat is not beyond the most strenuous clerical life.

Without this all our activity is as tinkling brass and sounding cymbal. It becomes a torso without a head, a body without a soul. That transparent spirituality which should rest upon every priestly countenance, vanishes and leaves but a worldly sheen. That quality which commands respect and admiration and authority, disappears. The priest is a mere worldling in clerical garb.

"I am tired."

The worldling's excuse on the lips of the cleric. But Christ left no precedent for relaxing our spiritual life in the face of bodily fatigue. On the contrary,



He made His converse with the Heavenly Father a means of strength and refreshment.

3. A pious active life without genuine zeal, an active, bustling life without prayer and recollection—neither makes a true priest, but of the two the former is the preferable. The two must be united and formed into one harmonious whole.

#### 64. *Headwinds—Apparent Success*

“And Jesus saw them laboring in rowing (for the wind was against them).” (Mark vi, 48; cfr. John vi, 16 sqq.; Matt. xiv, 25).

1. He allowed them to continue their fruitless but bitter efforts for twenty-five to thirty stadia, something like one and one-half hours, without making headway.

A representation of the Bark of Peter as it occasionally runs into squalls. The rowers labor without results until He wills otherwise.

Why this bootless toil? God’s ways are not our ways. So, too, God’s norm is not ours. His honor and glory lie more in the striving and constant individual effort than in the accomplishment that follows.

2. Pastoral duties meet many headwinds. And often with all the perspiration and fatigue, no progress is made. Courage and even hope are about to fail us, when along towards the “fourth watch,” the quickening voice of the Master is heard: “Have a good heart, it is I, fear not.”

65. *The Encouragement of the Master—The  
Asceticism of Hope*

“Have a good heart, it is I, fear not.” (Mark vi, 50).

1. Again and again the Master’s words call forth encouragement. (Cfr. Matt. ix, 2, 22; x, 28, 31; Mark vi, 50; John vi, 20; xvi, 33; Luke xii, 7-32; xxiv, 36).

It is particularly noteworthy that our Lord so frequently encouraged the disciples, and them alone. Is this not true, even in our own day? Perhaps the priest is easily discouraged and downcast.

“Have a good heart, it is I, fear not”—through the darkness and storm of our own day, the Master’s voice is heard.

2. His is the asceticism of hope. It is in violent contradiction to the asceticism of fear, of dour despair, of dank dread and clammy Calvinism. To the “Woe!” “Woe!” comes back the cheery cry: “Fear not, be of good heart.”

The flight of the soul is hampered and restrained more effectively by fear and anxiety than by any other means. But the blood courses freely, the heart beats high, and life is good when the soul can cry out: “*In te Domine speravi, non confundar in aeternum.*”

3. Hope and confidence are contagious. If in the midst of the storm, the priest can cry out with a heart full of confidence: “Be of good cheer, it is I, fear not,” he has become like his Divine Master.

66. *The Sinking Peter*

“But seeing the wind strong, he was afraid; and

when he began to sink, he cried out saying: Lord save me!" (Matt. xiv, 30).

1. A picture that is commonly found in the pastoral residence is one that recalls the incident related in the words of St. Matthew. The impetuous Peter is sinking. He stretches an imploring hand to the Master, who is coming to the rescue.

This would indicate that the priestly heart is attracted by similar experiences in its own life. Truly there is a basis in fact for this.

How often did your impetuosity lead you into difficulties which threatened to envelop you, until the Master appeared and stretched forth a saving hand.

Now success and recognition are yours, your heart beats joyously, all the world is roseate. Your spirit is keen to attempt the most difficult task. "Lord bid me come to Thee!"

2. "But seeing the wind strong, he was afraid; and he began to sink."

The wind was strong and Peter trembled. The softest breeze, the slightest reverse or discouraging word may fill us with grovelling fear. If only then the cry goes up, "Lord, save me!" all is well. He will reach out a loving hand to us, though He may occasionally chide us: "Oh! thou of little faith, why art thou discouraged?"

Are not many similiar scenes thrown on the screen of your own memory?

67. *The Eucharist—The Priest's Communion*

"He who eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him." (John vi, 57).

1. Let us recall that these words were addressed to the disciples, the first priests of the Apostolic Church. But Christ was speaking, in effect, to all priests of every age. He was impressing upon them the necessity of Holy Communion and the unspeakable crime of unworthily receiving the Lord and Savior. "This saying is hard, who can believe it?" Are not these the very words of a betrayer, of an unworthy recipient of the Eucharistic Christ?

"Have not I chosen you twelve; and one of you is a devil?"

2. The intimate connection of these words with the promise of the Eucharist is highly significant, just as that, later, the institution of the Blessed Sacrament immediately preceeded the fall of the betrayer.

It is incorrect, to say the least, to ascribe the downfall of Judas to the sin of avarice. The beginning of his degradation is here indicated as a sin against the faith.

Had he only departed at the time with the others! But he remained, he locked up in his heart the worm of unbelief, and began his rôle as the betrayer. "One of you is a devil." That is the proper characterization for every clerical Judas.

3. "Have not I chosen you twelve; and one of you is a devil?"

Let us recall the scene at ordination. The *ordinandi*

are grouped in the sanctuary, ready to receive the holy oils and the imprint of that indelible mark which will make them forever intimates of the household of Christ. Did a voice from the tabernacle even then proclaim: "Have not I chosen you twelve; and one of you is a devil?"

You remember who was there when you were ordained. Was there a traitor among those twelve also?

### 68. *The Banishment from Judea—Victims of Persecution*

"After these things Jesus walked in Galilee; for he would not walk in Judea, because the Jews sought to kill Him." (John vii, 1).

1. Thus we see that in the head province, of His own country, where He was born and fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Law, in the land where His Temple, the house of His Father stood, Christ could not remain and work among His own. He was forced to pay it short visits and leave immediately. The people had great affection for Him; but the high priests, the doctors of the law, and the Pharisees, hated Him, bitterly resented His growing popularity, and feared His influence. He is put down as a disturber of the religious peace, as an exponent of "lax morals," and as a contemner of the law.

2. The history of the Church is an exact replica of the life of her Divine Founder. It is repeated in the lives of her pontiffs from Clemens Romanus to Pius XI, in the lives of her bishops from Athanasius to

those of our own day, and in the history of the religious orders, which have stood out against the world and its hirelings. "Away with you, out beyond the boundaries, into a strange land far from home and kin!" And they go, comforted, if not happy, in the thought that Christ, their leader, went in shame and ignominy before them.

### 69. *Corban—The "Causae Piae"*

"But you say: If a man shall say to his father or mother, Corban (which is a gift), whatsoever is from me, shall profit thee. And further you suffer him not to do anything for his father or mother, making void the word of God by your own tradition, which you have given forth." (Mark vii, 11 sqq.)

1. Let us examine these words. Our Lord presents Himself as an advocate of the rights due to parents and as an advocate of the fourth commandment against the avarice of the priests of the Old Law. He demolishes with unrelenting logic their word-spinning casuistry—the ridiculous hair-splitting with which they attempt to cover their injustices.

2. Our Lord appears to us also as the expounder of a sane asceticism. To be sure, it is a commendable thing to be zealous about the house of God and all things that belong to it. But these *causae piae* can never be made to justify a neglect of filial love and duty. To do so means a violent reversal of the divine law.

This is reflected in the attitude of the Church re-

garding vocations. She considers as one of the marks of a true vocation the willingness and ability of the parents to release a son or daughter. The fourth commandment is not superseded by a work of supererogation. Children, whose aid is really necessary for mother and father, have no vocation, at least during the time this need exists, regardless of their own feelings in the matter.

3. How much dissatisfaction and scandal has arisen from the undue influencing of people in favor of ecclesiastical causes! Do not be a legacy-chaser! The enrichment of "poor monasteries" at the expense of the really needy does more harm than good.

#### 70. *The Canaanite Woman as an Advocate of the Foreign Missions*

"Who answering, said: It is not good to take the bread of the children, and to cast it to the dogs. But she said: Yea, Lord, for the whelps also eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters." (Matt. xv, 26 sq.).

1. Let us consider this beautiful scene as representing the Canaanite woman as an advocate of the foreign missions.

She hails from the coast-country, Phœnicia, and unmistakably is a "heathen woman."

She is having her troubles in obtaining a hearing. But her plight is such that even the chauvinistic disciples plead her case. "Send her away, for she crieth after us."

And yet the loving and compassionate Christ, He



who came to save all men, displays a strange reticence.

"I was not sent but to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel."

Nor is this all. The harsh, almost churlish words come from the lips of Christ Himself: "It is not good to take the bread of the children, and to cast it to the dogs."

Is this a divine justification for those who insist that the spiritual needs of our own people and country take precedence over those of the inhabitants of heathen lands?

2. And yet this Canaanite advocate of the heathen world cannot be set aside with a word, even a blighting word. She is tenacious of her purpose and takes the Master at His word.

It is true that the children of Israel are the children of the household, they the dogs. But to them also belongs a place in the family circle. The children have their place at the richly set table; to the dogs belong the scraps and leavings. Give them, O Lord, but this much, and they will be satisfied.

Such supplication cannot go unheeded. "Woman, great is thy faith, be it done to thee as thou wilt."

3. Is not this the piteous cry of the foreign missions? They do not demand a place at the table with the children of the household: they are satisfied with the crumbs that fall therefrom.

If we were to institute a comparison between the spiritual supplies (churches, schools, priests, etc.) of Christian and heathen countries, it is only too obvious that the latter partake of the crumbs.

Surely, we will not deprive them of this little mite; if we did, we should miss the point of the lesson Christ teaches us in this incident.

4. Let us not be niggardly with the occasional collections to the foreign missions. Their needs are so great that whatever we can reasonably do, would never be more than a crumb in comparison.

We cannot be impatient with the insistent importunings of these Canaanites. Their need is so pressing and their misery, which they seek to alleviate, is quite boundless.

"Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David: my daughter is grievously troubled by a devil."

### 71. *The Deaf Mute—The Ceremonies of the Church*

"And taking him from the multitude apart, He put his fingers into his ears, and spitting, He touched his tongue, and looking up to heaven, He groaned, and said to him: Ephphetha, which is, be thou opened." (Mark vii, 33 sq.).

1. The Church is an intelligent teacher. She has been one with her Divine Founder in administering her treasury of graces with apt and pregnant ceremonials. Baptism, Confirmation, the Last Sacrament, are beautifully clothed in ornate and colorful rites.

2. There is no doubt that these rites were, in substance, ordained by Christ Himself.

By way of comparison:

The Master took him from the multitude apart,

"He put His fingers into his ears and spitting, He touched his tongue . . . and said: Ephphetha, that is, be thou opened."

The Church: "*Sacerdos digito accipiat de saliva oris sui et tangat aures et nares infantis; tangendo vero . . . dicat, ephphetha, quod est adaperire.*"

The Master turns toward the man possessed by an unclean spirit with the words: "Be silent, unclean spirit, and leave this man."

The Church says: "*Exi ab eo (ea) immunde spiritus . . . Tu autem effugare diabole, etc.*"

The Master allows the woman afflicted with an issue of blood to touch His garment and thus cures her of her malady.

The Church gives the mother, at her churching, the hem of the stole to touch—*Porrigens ad manum mulieris extremam partem stolae eam introducit in ecclesiam.*

The Master bids the disciples: "Into whatever house you enter, first say: Peace be to this house!" (Luke x, 5; Matt. x, 12.).

The Church bids her priests to do likewise: "*Sacerdos ingrediens locum, ubi iacet infirmus, dicit: Pax huic domui.*"

The Master blesses bread and fishes, children and adults by raising His hands to heaven; similarly does the Church in all her blessings and benedictions. Thus her wonderful body of liturgy and ceremony is fashioned after the ceremonies of her Divine Founder. "Do as I have done."

And, finally, with what reverence and devotion does

not the Church perform all these things! And you? Oh! what nicety should be found here. *Sancta sancte!*

72. *The Leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees—Dangerous Influences*

“And He charged them saying: Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.” (Mark viii, 15).

1. Again and again, our Lord warns, not only the people, but particularly His disciples, against the evil influences of these two schools in the Church of Israel, sepulchral Phariseeism and agnostic Sadduceeism. Even the Apostolic school is not proof against this withering influence. “Be on your guard!” Was there not a Judas among them? His downfall, which had already begun, was hastened by his temporizing half-measures and his willingness to incline an ear towards the opposition.

The traces of the poison are readily apparent also in the lives of the other disciples.

2. “Be on your guard!” How timely this warning of our Divine Master is at all times, history attests only too well.

The most striking example of the evil effects of heresy, which has come down to our own day, is that of Jansenism. This poisonous leaven has spread itself throughout the Catholic world, and not until the decree of the saintly Pius X, of happy memory, on “Frequent Communion,” was its progress arrested.

And who will deny the evil effects of Modernism

and its local manifestation, "Americanism," in our own times? The warnings and condemnations of the Vicar of Christ constitute an official reform, but the evils leave their serpent trails through successive generations.

3. The warnings of the Divine Master against Phariseeism and Sadduceeism are constantly re-echoed in the pontifical decrees, syllabi, and encyclicals; in the syllabus of Pius IX, for example, and the encyclical against Modernism of Pius X. "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees!"

4. Cardinal Newman once remarked that English literature was distinctly Protestant in its spirit and tendency. It is more than true to-day that the literature of the masses is distinctly anti-Catholic in its ethical and religious aspects, and pagan in its æstheticism. This is only too evident in the periodical press and the great flood of worthless fiction with which we are deluged. It is impossible to live in this miasmatic atmosphere without infection. The Church's Index of Forbidden Books should have a much wider application than is at present given it. But, above all, the warning cry of our Divine Master: "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees," should be answered by the establishment of a virile Catholic press.

73. *The Testimony of Peter—Preaching Christ*

(Luke ix, 18 sqq.; Mark viii, 27 sqq.; Matt.

xvi, 13 sqq.)

"Who do men say that I am?" . . . "But who do you say that I am?"

This double question is significant and should serve as the starting point for a priestly examination of conscience.

1. "Who do men say that I am?" Exactly. What do your own spiritual children say of Christ our Lord? Were you to question them all,—men, women, and children,—what would be their answer? Is He in very fact their Way, their Truth, and their Life? If not, upon whom rests the blame?

Is there perhaps something lacking in the sermons they hear every Sunday? Christ has left us a sufficient record of his work and words. His all-entrancing personality, His power to draw all men to Himself, shines through this record and its interpretation by the Church and her saintly children. But the curtain must be drawn aside, the light must be allowed to enter. Sermons and instructions are but the medium through which the *Lumen Christi* is transmitted. Is this medium crystal-clear, and are its diffused rays pleasing, beautiful, and appealing?

2. "And what do you say?"

You, who are the apostles, priests, and pastors, whom he calls His own, what has Christ become to you, in your prayer and meditation, in your visits to the Blessed Sacrament, in your daily offering of the Holy Sacrifice?

"Is the servant greater than the Master?" Can it be that, under the garb of a laboring-man or a working girl of your own flock, there beats a heart more attuned to the Divine Heart?

Applicable here also: "Not flesh and blood have

revealed it to you, but my father who is in heaven."

3. Were Christ to-day to propound the question "Who do you say that I am?" The unhesitating answer would come from the Church and the successor of Peter: "You are Christ, the Son of the living God." Through all the vagaries of the human mind and heart, the Catholic Church alone has preserved the profession of faith just as it came from the lips of her first authentic witnesses. All honor and glory to God!

74. *The Rock of the Church—The Priest as  
"Defensor Fidei"*

"Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matt. xvi, 18).

1. In all history there is no more remarkably fulfilled prophecy than this.

Even Macaulay was forced to admit: "She [the Church] saw the commencement of all the governments and of all the ecclesiastical establishments that now exist in the world; and we feel no assurance that she is not destined to see the end of them all. She was great and respected before the Saxon had set foot on Britain, before the Roman had passed the Rhine, when Grecian eloquence still flourished in Antioch, when idols were worshipped in the Temple of Mecca. And she may still exist in undiminished vigor when some traveller from New Zealand shall, in the midst of a vast solitude, take his stand on a broken arch of London Bridge to sketch the ruins of St. Paul's."



It is obvious that this divine prediction is true of the Church as a whole. Localities may and have been swept clean by the storms of hell. Here and there whole districts and even countries were temporarily razed. Individuals, too, from the highest to the lowest, have been swept away by the angry waters. Only he who clings to the Rock participates in the prophetic words: "Thou art Peter, the Rock."

2. In what sense are these words applicable to the priest and pastor of souls?

In a very definite and special manner. To the laity, in the final analysis, the Church is a living entity through its priests and spiritual advisers. Rome speaks, but the priest interprets, clarifies, expounds. Christ speaks, His representatives elucidate and make the application. Christ is the giver of the laws, the priest is the administrator of them. Does not, therefore, his zeal, discretion, and example determine the spiritual condition of his flock? Is not he the *forma gregis*, the support and norm of faith and morals? Defections in any locality usually follow the shepherd's example. With him stands or falls the flock entrusted to his care.

#### 75. *The Power of the Keys—Alleged Usurpation of the Divine Prerogatives*

"And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. xvi, 19).

1. The private secretary of the highest executive enjoys unlimited confidence. He is a witness to the most exclusive transactions. But what is more inti-

mate than the affairs of the soul? And yet to these is the priest a witness. He is the penitent's private secretary as it were. To him has been given the key of the heart. In him is placed the confidence which opens the heart of his penitent to the innermost recesses, to thoughts and actions which have been hidden from every eye, even from the eye of a loving mother.

What power has the priest of God received from Christ! The power of the keys, the position of private secretary of His contrite children, the care of the souls of men.

2. How pointedly this is brought home when the priest emancipates a life-long slave of Satan, when a death-bed repentance, through his instrumentality, opens Heaven for a poor sinner.

"What you loose upon earth, that also is loosed in heaven."

Anti-Catholic prejudice sometimes speaks of "the usurpation of divine prerogatives." But it is plain to the child of the Church that the powers and privileges of the priesthood rest upon divine sanction.

76. *The Transfiguration on Thabor—Hours of Prayer*

(Luke ix, 28 sqq.; Mark ix, 1 sqq.; Matt. xvii, 1 sqq.)

1. "And He took them with Him into a mountain."

It is plain that God does not reveal Himself to us in the midst of worldly affairs, in the market of commerce and traffic, in the places of ease and luxury. In the silence and retreat of a mountain stillness, far

from the maddening crowd, away from worldly cares and anxieties, He reveals Himself to us.

The great spiritual giants of the Church have ever recognized this fact. Hence we find that early school of sanctity situated in the Theban desert, a Benedict in Subiaco, Bernard in Cîteaux, a Romuald in Camalduli, a Francis of Assisi in Monte Alverno, and an Ignatius in Manresa. They went up into the mountain with Christ and there saw the transfiguration.

Is there among your acquaintances a priest who is above the law of prayer, who can pray equally well, *i. e.*, equally poorly, in every place, who can say his Breviary and simultaneously be occupied with secular things? There are such, unfortunately.

In the nature of things, such prayer cannot be a "lifting of the heart to God," a visit with Christ on Thabor. These are the fruit of a deep interior and exterior recollection.

2. "And while he prayed He was transfigured."

Every devout prayer transfigures, elevates, ennobles. The child kneeling at its mother's knee, repeating with inimitable trust and faith his evening prayers, is like to an angel of God. The man who lifts his heart to Heaven with earnest recollection has the glow of another world on his countenance. What is more beautiful than a maiden at prayer? Is there not a softening of the features of the hardened sinner as he renews his long neglected pledge of friendship with his God and Saviour? A new light shines upon him.

Prayer transfigures, it sheds light and sunshine over heart and countenance. Do the children of your

flock witness such an example of pious recollection in you?

3. "And Peter said: Lord, it is good to be here."

It appears that the little group, weary and worn, lingered at the foot of the hill. The invitation to the three favored Apostles, who were evidently fatigued and overcome with sleep, was not specially welcome. They had no inkling of the wonderful experience that was about to be theirs.

Have you not had a similar experience? A sweet movement of divine grace urged you to go before the tabernacle for a brief visit with your Master. Physically you were disinclined, but grace conquered. And there, in the peace and stillness of the sanctuary, God's love inflamed your heart, and you were raised far above the sordid world. You cried out with Peter: "Oh! it is good to be here!" That was the reward of the sacrifice you made, of the climb to the mountain top.

### 77. *The Lunatic—Special Graces must be Earned*

1. "As they descended from the mountain top, there met him a great multitude." (Luke ix, 37).

Is not this a familiar experience of the priest? Hardly has he arisen from his prayer, his thanksgiving, his few moments of recollection,—and a multitude of activities come forward to meet him. He is beseeched to help, to console, to raise up, to heal, and to stoop to recover the grovelling victims of satanic fury.

2. "And I desired thy disciples to cast him out, and they could not."

Again a daily experience of pastoral life. Some poor soul is brought to you for help and counsel. You have experience, discretion, ability. But all to no avail. One thing alone is lacking. A special grace of God is needed, and this must be earned.

3. "This deliverance cannot be accomplished except through prayer and fasting."

Why is it that oftentimes an uncultured, simple pastor can effect a cure of a spiritual malady, where the more learned have failed? The difference lies in the faith and mortification of the individual.

"To the believer everything is possible." The supernatural sphere is not attuned to the natural. Great graces of deliverance must be wrung from the hands of God. It is an inexorable spiritual law. The Saints with their unerring but distasteful logic acknowledge it and act accordingly. Thus it is that an Ignatius of Loyola stands waist-deep in the icy Seine to obtain the conversion of a public sinner, that a Francis Xavier scourges himself for the redemption of an immoral soldier. It is the tussle with God, the wrestling of Jacob with the Angel and his declaration: "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." (Gen. xxxii, 26).

#### 78. *Church Assessments—Ecclesiastical Privileges and Exemptions*

1. "What is thy opinion, Simon? The kings of the earth, of whom do they receive tribute or custom?

Of their own children, or of strangers? And he said: Of strangers. Jesus said to him: Then the children are free." (Matt. xvii, 24 sq.).

Such were the conditions in the early Church, until the separation of Church and State took place. There were no levies or assessments. The parishioners were free; ecclesiastical exemption and the *causae piae* were still in force. But now it is otherwise. Even stipends are put down as income.

But the Divine Master paid the tax to the Roman government, just as He did to the Synagogue.

2. "They that receive the didrachmas, came to Peter and said to him: doth your Master not pay the didrachma? He said: yes."

Who knows but that it is better that many of the ancient privileges and exemptions are no longer in force. They had their uses, but unfortunately their abuses as well. They were the cause of many scandals and obstacles to needed reforms. At best they make for partiality, jealousy, and a class division. At any rate they are an impossibility in our modern political state. The clergy should stand *above* but not *beyond* the people.

### 79. *The Dispute Among the Disciples*

#### *A. Clerical Table-Talk*

"What did you treat of in the way? But they held their peace, for in the way they had disputed among themselves, which of them should be the greatest." (Mark ix, 32 sq.)

Social gatherings constitute one of the greatest temptations and sources of danger for the cleric. The sacred ministry, like all other professions, is subject to jealousies. The social gatherings of priests only too often become the clearing-house for this tainted currency. If Christ suddenly appeared in the midst of us, would the effect be similar to that in the incident related in the Gospel of St. Mark?

The sacred narrative at this point has at least one mitigating feature. The disciples contended among themselves as to which one was superior. It is to be feared that our social conventions would taboo such ungentlemanly conversation and transfer it to the less disagreeable but more dangerous gossip and baiting of those who are absent.

The diocesan *chronique scandaleuse* is the record of the minutes of many such gatherings. Each meeting takes it down from the shelf, reads the contents for the delight of those present, and makes considerable additions for the delectation of subsequent gatherings.

What would Christ our Lord say if He suddenly appeared in the midst of such a gathering?

#### B. "*Ambitio Clericalis*"

Our Lord rebuked the disciples of His own time with the stinging rebuke: "If any man desire to be first, he shall be the last of all and the minister of all." The disciples had been quarreling concerning their relative rank.

Have not our social conventions modified this undignified and un-Christian practice? Would a group



of clerics discuss this topic in the same manner as the disciples? But how far have we progressed in the art of wire-pulling, clerical politics, diplomatic jobbery and all other modifications of the gentle art of "maneuvering for position"?

Fundamentally, the evil is the same. The pride and ambition of the human heart are the same to-day as in the time of our Lord. Nay, if frankness and candor mitigate a vice, it is to be feared that we are more reprehensible than the disciples were.

A recent writer tersely says: "Ecclesiastical offices as instituted by our Lord, are, by their very nature and the designation of Christ, not an instrument of personal advancement and gain, but a means for the freedom and peace of mankind."

### 80. *The Praise of Children—Childlike Candor*

"Unless you . . . become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." (Matt. xviii, 3.).

1. Our Lord has just called a child and placed him in the midst of His Apostles as a living exemplification of His words.

It is remarkable that these canticles of praise for children are an especial characteristic of Christ. The Old Testament is bare of any such song.

But do not the words of St. Paul strike a different note?—"When I was a child, I spoke as a child . . . But, when I became a man, I put away the things of a child." (I Cor. xiii, 11).

Does this present a contradiction between the Master and His disciple?

On the contrary, the two declarations supplement each other. The half-truths of childhood must be laid aside. Discretion, judgment, and vigor of intellect must be assumed by the man. In this sense it is anything but complimentary to remark of a priest that he is still a child.

But the innocence, the frankness, and the candor of childhood should be carried over into adult life. These qualities in no way conflict with the demands of manhood.

Indeed, among your clerical acquaintances you undoubtedly recall just such characters, *animae candidae*, who have the respect and admiration of all. They are men of character, strong character, with adamantine wills and unvarying principles, but their dealings with men show forth a sweet reasonableness and agreeable suavity.

In them, strength has not become boorishness, knowledge of self is not exaggerated egotism, and authority is not domineering over-lordship. The battle of life has not embittered them, seared their souls, or made their consciences inelastic. The modern *Zeitgeist* is inimical to their spirit. Young men to-day assume a cocksureness scarcely becoming their elders. They feel that they must experience life in all its phases before they leave their teens. An air of blasé ennui is deemed quite proper. Their sense-life is highly developed, while spiritually and intellectually they remain infants. Such are the children

of these days, but not such as Christ referred to in the words: "Become as little children."

2. The command of our Lord is final and has a particular application to our own day. "Amen, I say to you, unless you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven." Even the omniscient *Zeitgeist* cannot improve on these words. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."

## 81. *Safeguarding Innocence*

### *A. The Priest as a Friend of Children*

"And he that shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me." (Matt. xviii, 5).

"My words are the life," Christ once remarked. Christ's words are the strength and source of Christian life. What other explanation is there of the Church's solicitude concerning the education of her children, of the countless asylums, orphan homes, nurseries, children's associations of one kind or another, the great body of heroic men and women who have consecrated their lives for His little ones?

Let us ask a St. Vincent, why his endless searchings through the streets of Paris? He will answer sweetly and gently: "And he that shall receive one such little child . . ."

His daughters in the Orient strive unceasingly to snatch infant outcasts from abandonment and death in the streets and alleys, the canals and rivers of China. They gladly give their lives that these bundles of rags,

which hide like ugly clam-shells the pearls of human souls, may not be cast away and lost forever. "And he that shall receive one such little child . . . "

Every priest and pastor of souls should sear these words into his heart: "And he that shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me."

### *B. Clerical Child-Murderer*

"But he that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea." (Matt. xviii, 6).

The beloved is an object of care and protection. The greater the love bestowed, the more poignant the grief of the bereft lover. How boundless the sorrow of a mother stricken by the loss of an only child!

Our Divine Lord loves little children. They are very dear to His Sacred Heart, and He has reserved a special place for them in the ministrations of His Church.

Without in some measure grasping the extent and depth of this divine love for little children, it is impossible rightly to evaluate the intensity of Christ's anger, as expressed in the words of the Sacred Writer.

We can appreciate the divine wrath when we remember that Christ looked forward through the centuries to our own day and beheld the conditions surrounding His little ones. He saw our over-crowded cities as inimical to all healthy child-life, the lack of a true recreational atmosphere, the degradation of all

forms of commercialized amusements and the widespread acceptance of false educational standards, abetted by the prostitution of the manifold modern agencies for the dissemination of information and knowledge. Who can plumb the depth of Christ's anger as He viewed this picture of desolation!

And yet, how shallow it must be in comparison to that divine wrath called forth by the neglect of His little ones at the hands of His anointed! The Church's solicitude for the education and training of her children assumes an entirely different aspect in the light of these considerations. The priest of God might well ponder these sacred duties and obligations frequently. May the words of the Divine Judge never be addressed to him: "Where are the souls of the little ones which I entrusted to your care and which you have allowed to perish?" Wo to the priest who is a wolf to his lambs instead of a shepherd!

### 82. *The Exorcist—The Lay Apostolate*

"Master, we saw a certain man casting out devils in Thy name, and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said to him: Forbid him not; for he that is not against you, is for you." (Luke ix, 49 sq.).

1. Who is this man of whom St. John complains to the Master? We do not know, but of this we are certain, he was not an enemy of Christ. He was, in all probability, a believing, shrewd Israelite, who recognized the potency of the name of Jesus, as dis-

played in the exorcisms which he had witnessed. At any rate, he used in good faith and with good results the saving name of Jesus.

2. What was the motive of the Apostles' complaint? The answer of our Lord would lead us to believe that he discovered a taint of jealousy in their too ready zeal. This man lacked an official commission; he was not one of the chosen group. Hence he should forego his activities. How often do we not hear the self-same criticism now? How unjust it is, we may discern from our Lord's reply: "Do not forbid him; for there is no man that doth a miracle in my name, and can soon speak ill of me." (Mark ix, 38).

3. These words of the Master have a particular applicability to the conditions of our own day and age. Ludolfus, referring to the words of Bede, makes the application include the lay apostolate: "*Per istum, qui non erat de societate apostolorum, signatur laicus bonus, qui non habet praedicandi officium, tamen bonis verbis et exemplis agit ad expulsionem daemonis.*"

There are men and women among the laity whose zeal for God's house consumes them. Their activities manifest themselves in the political, social, and literary domains of Catholic life. How necessary, how welcome such zeal!

And yet it cannot be denied that zealous lay-activity not infrequently causes friction with the clergy.

Complacent, easy-going members of the clerical body may be unduly disturbed in their *quieta non movere* attitude. The baser element in human nature asserts itself, underhanded methods are resorted to

to silence the unwelcome intruder or render him impotent.

How few can truthfully voice the supernatural ideal of the great Apostle of the Gentiles: "So that by all means, whether by occasion, or by truth, Christ be preached." (Phil i, 18).

4. "Do not forbid him," admonishes the Master. The history of the Catholic Church is eloquent with the deeds of her lay apostles, first and foremost in the Catholic press, whose tradition is brightest in the valiant lives of many lay-writers, both living and dead. Our strongest and most potent organisations have been lay-inspired. Pressing social and economic problems have called forth the best talent from among the lay Catholics. We need not call upon recent history in Europe to furnish illustrations for this contention. It must be sufficiently clear to all that in our times an active, zealous laity is absolutely necessary to grapple with the tremendous problems confronting us. "All hands on board!" must be the command. "He who is not with you, is against you. Do not forbid him."

### 83. *The Terrible Either—or Proximate Occasion of Sin*

"If thy hand scandalize thee, cut it off." (Matt. xviii, 8).

1. Three times Christ repeated His warning of a place of punishment, "where the worm dieth not and the fire is not extinguished."



Seldom do such terrible words resound through the discourses of our Lord.

Who can better realize the sorrow of the Sacred Heart, or measure the depth of that holy anger, than He who beholds the innermost secrets of the human soul? Oh! what anxiety, care, and sorrow do not the *occasionarii* cause to the confessor!

2. "If thy hand scandalize thee, cut it off."

Can it be that these words apply to your hands, O priest of God,—to anointed hands, once dedicated to the service of God, but now help-mates to a life of ease and sin?

"Cut it off and cast it from thee!"

3. "If thy eye scandalize thee, pluck it out."

Can it be that these words apply to your eyes, O priest of God,—to eyes once given to the service of God, but now an occasion and a means of sin?

"Pluck it out and cast it from thee!"

#### 84. *Salt Without Savor—The Inactive Priest*

"Salt is good. But if the salt shall lose its savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned?" (Luke xiv, 34 sq.)

Repeatedly the Master uses this striking simile to characterize with deadly accuracy the slothful priest.

1. "But if the salt lose its savor . . ." Let us not fix our mind's eye on the final degree of this unsavoriness lest we overlook the various stages in the process of deterioration.

The conversation becomes insipid; there is lacking that spiritual seasoning which gives a characteristic

flavor to every word. Then prayer, that intimate conversation with God, loses its savor and becomes an empty formula, like an uninspired declamation delivered to empty seats. The spiritual viewpoint grows dim, the cataract of worldliness shuts out the light of heaven, the gnawing pangs of a parasitic desire for pleasure drive the heart to further conquests. The innocent sources are tapped at first, then the more dangerous, and finally the dregs.

Poor child of the world in the garb of a priest!

2. "But if the salt shall lose its savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned?"

We are here reminded of the words of St. Paul, that it is almost a moral impossibility that an apostate, who has once "tasted the heavenly gift . . . be renewed again to penance." (Heb. vi, 4—6). How logical the application to him who has been chosen to be one of God's elect, one of His anointed!

It is unquestionably easier to recall the ordinary Christian. For him there are still depths of God's goodness which have been unrevealed. But the tepid priest has ascended Thabor and witnessed the transfiguration. There is no greater glory with which his eyes may be enthralled. He has become blind in the very brilliance of God's daily transfiguration on the altar. No words can recall him; he is lost to all the ordinary means of recall.

3. "Neither useable as earth or dung, it is cast forth as refuse."

As a commentary on these words, let us recall the remarks of the great Bishop Emmanuel von Ketteler

on a certain occasion, in 1852: "In view of the universal respect of the laity for their priests, which I have witnessed not only in my own home surroundings, but in the most lowly hut in Berlin, I never dreamed that a Catholic priest in a Catholic country could be despised by a Catholic people. But since my arrival in Mayence I have had experiences which recalled the words of the Lord: '*Quod si sal infatuatum fuerit, ad nihilum valet ultra*' (Matt. v, 13). I cannot deny experiences which have opened a vision, hitherto veiled, of the tribulation of Christ's Church at the hands of her own priests." \*

85. *Salvaging the Wreckage*—"Se Impendere et Superimpendere"

"The Son of man is come to save that which was lost." (Matt. xviii, 11).

I. For what purpose have you been sent to your parish?

What were the ideals that attracted you when you were a young priest, full of zeal and holy ambition? The grand and glorious object of the priesthood overshadowed every other aspiration.

How you rejoiced in those little first-fruits which you gathered in the confessional, in the pulpit, at the sick-bed! How you exulted in the consciousness of your vicegerency for Christ and His Church!

A holy zeal carried you on over every difficulty and disappointment.

\* O. Pfülf, S. J., *Emanuel Freiherr von Ketteler*. Vol. I, p. 312, Mayence, 1899.

Is it still thus? Perhaps there has been a steady growth in your zeal for the salvation of souls. Your highest ideal is that of the Good Shepherd, the Savior of souls, and you have gone on through the years, growing grey in the service of Christ, without ever a thought of respite.

2. But alas, it is not always thus! There are among the laborers in God's vineyard time-servers and politicians who serve other masters besides Christ and His Church.

They have not come to save that which was lost, but rather to allow that to be lost which could have been saved. To save means to combat dangerous occasions and temptations; to strike valiantly in the battle for the endangered, as the fire-fighters, forgetful of their own safety, strive might and main against a destructive fire, not only to save a burning building and its occupants, but adjoining buildings as well; just as the life-guards brave a treacherous sea to rescue a sinking ship: that is saving, rescuing, snatching from danger. It demands eternal vigilance, instant response, heroic labor, *se impendere et superimpendere*.

3. To be sure the most valiant and self-forgetful priest cannot rescue all, even in his limited sphere. He must at times behold the destruction of souls in the storms and conflagrations of a sinful world. But courage! If he has done all he could, within the limits of his power and strength, God will not demand an accounting of those who are lost in spite of his efforts. Even Christ Himself could not save all men;

even He complained bitterly in words that must often come to the lips of a zealous priest: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often have I desired . . . but you have not desired."

### 86. *The Lost Sheep—The Love of the True Shepherd*

"What think you? If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them should go astray: doth he not leave the ninety-nine in the mountains, and go to seek that which is gone astray?" (Matt. xviii, 12 sq.)

1. A splendid characterization of the true shepherd! Even for the last and weakest of his lambs, his loving heart has care and solicitude. How frequently is this repeated in the life of the true shepherd of souls! Those precious little ones who promised so much in the days following their first experience with the sacramental life of the Church, have fallen upon evil ways and have been waylaid. What anguish for the heart of the true shepherd! But his eyes search them out. He never relinquishes the pace. He pursues them unrelentingly. He prays, begs, cries, beseeches, implores Heaven for the safe deliverance of these souls. O happy day, O blessed hour, when the chase ends successfully in the confessional, at the sick-bed, or in any other place to which the mysterious ways of God's grace may lead. Excruciatingly enmeshed in a bed of thorns, poignantly conscious of its plight, half-hoping, half-despairing, filled with shame and remorse, the lost sheep cries out to the Good Shepherd. He loosens

the thorns, one by one, gently, deftly, sympathetically; he pours soothing ointment into the wounds; he raises up the bleeding soul and tenderly carries it back to his fold.

What stirring scenes are depicted in the pages of the Book of Life!

It may be a black sheep, hardened by years of sin, an inveterate drunkard, an immoral reprobate, whose defiance of God has continued to the very last hour, and yet, behold! the Good Shepherd saves his soul from the eternal abyss.

2. It is noteworthy, however, that the emphasis in the story lies not on the act of saving, but rather on the effort and solicitude employed to rescue the wayward sheep.

"Doth he not leave the ninety-nine in the mountains, and go to seek that which is gone astray?"

Is this a characteristic of your pastoral care? Is it not true that the impatient words: "Nothing more can be done in that case; he is past all hope of amendment," only too frequently express your sentiments? How many might have been saved, had they been trailed to the distant by-ways of their sinful lives!

Will not God demand an accounting of you for these souls? Will not the reflections which you now employ to soothe your conscience rise up as witnesses against you at the final reckoning?

3. But how unspeakably worse if the parable is reversed! If the shepherd neglects the ninety-nine to dandle a favorite; if the pastor acts as though organisations of pious women were the only means of sal-



vation, forgetting and neglecting the crying needs of the men and young boys; if he shows preference to the plutocrat over the poor, then the sacred parable is reversed!

87. *"Show Thyself to the World"—The Itch  
For Public Recognition  
(John vii, 3 sq.).*

"And his brethren said to Him: Pass from hence, and go into Judea, that thy disciples also may see thy works which thou dost. For there is no man that doth anything in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou dost these things, manifest thyself to the world."

1. These words have not yet gone into disuse. When they are not the promptings of foolish friends or relations, they are the urgings of a still more foolish personal pride and vanity.

Surely those long years of study, those brilliant examinations, those hard-earned academic degrees, those special talents, should not be lost to the world and posterity! No! No! "Arise, manifest yourself to the world," allow your light to shine.

2. And yet, let us be just in these matters. There are unquestionably instances when these restless, dissatisfied longings have a foundation in fact. Great talents are, sometimes, by the untowardness of circumstances, forced into cramped surroundings; great lights shed their brilliance to no avail, illuminating a bleak, unpopulated country. And yet these are the ways of God. Let us recall the despised Nazareth,



where the Light of the world was hidden for thirty long years. His hour came at last; so, too, will yours come, when God wills.

88. *The Hatred of the World—False Com-  
promises*

“The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I give testimony of it, that the works thereof are evil.” (John vii, 7)

I. These words seem particularly directed at our own times and at those among the clerics who expect the salvation of the Church from a more intimate union with the *Zeitgeist*.

“The world cannot hate you.” Let us ask ourselves, why?

Is it perhaps that we are not merely in the world, but of it; that we see eye to eye with it; that we are in accord with its ideals? Is it perhaps that the world deeply impresses you, makes you captive with its accomplishments and successes? Or that you are pleased to be called, by the world, one of its own, one of its darlings, one of its successful ones?

And hence follows that vacillating, concessionary, temporizing spirit in the face of unyielding principles or a definite Catholic tradition. There follows that dangerous fraternizing and hobnobbing with even the enemies of the Church. There follows that easy acceptance of the standards of the world, which robs Catholicity of all distinction. There is pleasure in being known as “an up-to-date man;” but the compli-

ment is extremely doubtful. This is certain: "The world cannot hate you." Hatred springs from the consciousness of a deadly enemy. Betrayers, spies, and informers are not hated by the enemy, though they may be cordially despised.

But he who sets himself up against the world, in opposition to its indifferentism, its spirit of compromise, prepares for himself the hatred of the world.

"But me it hateth: because I give testimony of it, that the works thereof are evil."

2. The hatred of the world has been inherited by the Church. It cannot be otherwise. Were the Church no longer the object of the world's hatred, she would have ceased to be the Church of Christ.

All efforts which have for their purpose the reconciliation of the Church with the *Zeitgeist* and its pagan culture, are essentially misdirected, inherently impossible.

Gentleness, patience, and forbearance towards the enemy is right and proper and wholly within the spirit of the Master; but to retreat from important positions, to pare off dogmas, and make concession of principles, means acting the traitor.

He who wishes to avoid the hatred of the world, must become one with it.

3. "The world cannot hate you." We may consider this in another light. Perhaps you are too unimportant, too weak, too mild. There is little need to be concerned about you. Only the strong arouse opposition.

The more energetically (not fanatically, that would

be foreign to the spirit of Christ), a priest, a religious order, a bishop, an organisation or a publication wages the battle for God, the more intensely and successfully they conduct the affairs of His Church, the greater and more violent is the hatred of the world and of the enemies of the Church.

Far more peaceful and undisturbed are the lives of those who accept the world and its standards, or at least acquiesce in them sufficiently to be harmless to the supremacy of the *status quo*. This makes for peace, the praise that comes from a slothful, unprincipled life.

### 89. *Towards Jerusalem—The Acceptance of Voluntary Sacrifice—Clerical Horror of Death*

“And it came to pass, when the days of His assumption were accomplishing, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.” (Luke ix, 51).

1. Such is the force of voluntary sacrifice, the adamant strength of a life built upon a single purpose, self-willed, consciously and deliberately chosen. The Cross upon Golgotha is the goal of Christ; without a waver or hesitation He proceeds directly and deliberately towards it.

How frequently is not this characteristic reproduced in the lives of the Saints, the martyrs, and the great souls who, if need arose, gladly embraced death.

With what disposition do you approach a hard and disagreeable task, a position or piece of work which is

distasteful and not according to your liking, not equal to your estimated abilities?

Do you then "set face to go to Jerusalem"? Or do you, by means of subterfuge and clerical "politics," set out in another direction? The City of Peace, where there is rest and comfortable pleasure—is the goal you have appointed for yourself. But with Jerusalem, the City of Sorrow and Pain, you desire no acquaintance.

2. You are three score and ten. Your hair is grey, nay white, your stature bent. You cannot be far distant from the end of the road. The eternal Jerusalem looms up before you. Is your gaze fixed upon it? Or do you shun the thought of death, shudder at the recurrence of that which must inevitably be your fate?

Are you one of those who sip the nectar of life and so conduct themselves as though this might continue forever?

#### 90. *The Anger of the Apostles—Indiscreet Zeal* (Luke ix, 51 sqq.)

1. The Master dispatches messengers to various parts to find a lodging. But they are not universally welcomed. Samaria dismisses them shortly, for their "faces were set towards Jerusalem." The old feelings of nationalism have arisen again. The anger of the two disciples, James and John, flares up: "Lord wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" (Luke ix, 54).

Is not this zeal for the honor and glory of God? Is it not love for Him whom they believe to be misjudged and despised?

The words of the Master inform us how differently He viewed this matter: "You know not of what spirit you are. The Son of Man came not to destroy souls, but to save." (Luke ix, 55 sq.)

2. O priest of God, what wisdom lies in these words, what a condemnation they constitute of indiscreet and violent anger, which attempts to force an entrance into obdurate hearts!

And why such passion? Because you have been approached in a manner unsuited to your dignity and pride!

Who can measure the damage wrought by anger? Not only have souls been estranged from you, but from the Master as well!

Oh! those angry words that sped from the pulpit like poisoned arrows and made enemies for the Church, and those harsh, offending words in the confessional, which opened new wounds and evoked the painful cry: "I will never go again!"

How sorrowful the divisions in a parish between the pastor and his flock—those raucous declarations of war called forth by an ill-advised word, a hasty command, an indiscreet judgment!

3. "You know not of what spirit you are."

Let us learn the spirit of the Master from St. Francis de Sales, who by his gentleness won over the most rabid Calvinists, and from St. Francis Xavier,

who, though spat upon, continued his sermon to the Japanese pagans.

91. *The First Successes of the Disciples—of  
the Young Cleric*

“And the seventy-two returned with joy saying: Lord, the devils also are subject to us in thy name.” (Luke x, 17 sqq.)

1. Do not your thoughts return to the spring-time of your priesthood, when you were young and vigorous and full of zeal for the glory of God’s house?

Who can measure the joy of the newly anointed, as he steps into the vineyard of his calling, like the eagle soaring into the clouds, as he enters for the first time to apply the miraculous power of the keys, as he mounts the pulpit to preach his first sermon, as for the first time he enters the sick-room to minister to the dying, as he passes for the first time through city and country with his sacramental God in his bosom! Oh! the joy of representing Christ and walking amidst the people in His stead!

And the joys that come to the heart of the young priest when he is conscious of his newly ordained powers, when he sees the striking results of his words and exhortations, when he beholds the tears of joy and hears words of heartfelt thanksgiving!

Yet these things may not be written; they must be experienced;—you have experienced them!

And then there were those intimate communings

with Christ in the Tabernacle, when you came to Him rejoicing: "O Lord! I have accomplished something with thy grace; I rejoice and I am glad in thy name!"

2. Such are the joys of the Catholic priesthood, with its marvellous and miraculous powers, with its treasury, such as no prince of the world ever had at his disposal, with its curatives, such as no doctor ever employed, with its power to strike chords in the human heart hidden to all other agencies.

3. These joys are proper and befitting, for the Master rejoices with His disciples at the present day, just as He did then.

But Our Lord does not fail to leave a kindly lesson. He teaches us to purify our joy and measure all things in terms of our own personal sanctity.

"Even the evil spirits. . . ." Such deeds bring no personal gain; they do not increase our standing before God. They result, rather, from the fact that "your names appear in the Book of Life."

The results of work in the pulpit, confessional, etc., the manifest operations of divine grace, the joyful outburst of religious enthusiasm, all these may lead the priest to ascribe to himself what in reality must be credited to God and His grace.

## 92. *The Priest As Consoler and Consoled*

"Come to me, all ye that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you." (Matt. xi, 28).

1. *A Word For All*.—Scarcely any other word of



Christ has had greater appeal or carried more consolation with it through the centuries. Again and again it resounds from the pulpit and the altar; every beaming sanctuary lamp, every crucifix and image of the Sacred Heart carries it forth into the world and consolingly into hearts.

2. *A Word for the Priest.*—Since these words were directed at the disciples, they are particularly applicable to priests. And indeed where is consolation and encouragement more necessary? The feeling of responsibility at times almost crushes the heart of the priest, the shrill dissonance of weak, sinful human nature breaks in upon the harmony of his exalted calling! How often does he not experience disappointment, disillusionment, ingratitude!

And if at times he is quite engulfed in the feelings of discouraging lassitude, without light, without consolation, and without hope, what are the reasons?

He does not heed the invitation to Christ as expressed in the words: Come to me. Why do you seek from men consolation which I alone can give? Why do you not go to the tabernacle and in its peace and calm pour out your overburdened heart to me?

3. *A Word for the Confessional.*—"Come to me all . . ." That is an inscription which should appear above every confessional. Here it is that the priest, in the person of Christ, can make these words live. The healing of bruised hearts is so much his particular task, that, if rightly performed, the priest can do an inestimable amount of good in this way. Wearily and heavy-footed they make their way to the

confessional,—the poor and abandoned, the prodigal son, the erring lamb, the hardened sinner—and having unburdened themselves they leave consoled, encouraged, and reanimated.

Here indeed the word of Christ finds actual and marvellous fulfillment in our daily lives!

93. *The Yoke and the Burden—Pharisaical Imposition*

“Take up my yoke upon you . . . For my yoke is sweet and my burden light.” (Matt. xi, 29 sq.)

1. How true these words of Christ, our Lord! How incomparably sweeter is the burden of His yoke than that of the Old Law, with the endless interpretations which the Scribes and Pharisees had inserted and imposed upon the people. Scarcely a move was possible without becoming galled in such a yoke.

How reasonable and equitable, how well suited to the better nature of man, is the New Testament law, so much more easily fulfilled because of Christ’s exalted example, His words of encouragement, His abiding grace!

2. How do you follow in the footsteps of Christ? Is there a twinge of conscience as you repeat these words before your people? Are you among those clerical tyrants who through their fault-finding and bickering, their irascible and censorious temperaments and their petty formalism, impose upon the people a burden that is anything but sweet and light?

The brood of Scribes and Pharisees has not yet died

out and more than one tragic dissension must be laid at their door. Examine carefully whether or not there are in your charge such as have just grounds for complaint that the yoke you are imposing is not what the Master promised it would be. The justification of extremes by reference to the Cross of Christ has done untold harm.

94. "*Learn of Me, For I am Meek and Humble of Heart.*"

(Matt. xi, 29)

1. Learn of me, that is, imitate me. What would otherwise be difficult, too difficult perhaps for poor, weak human nature, in the moral code of Christ, becomes less onerous through His example. For He does the very things which He recommends to His followers. He is always leading, always first, always bearing the brunt of the battle.

Here is an example for the pastor. There is no better way in which to lead a congregation along the difficult path to salvation. *Verba movent, exempla trahunt*. "Learn of me."

On the contrary, it is worse than beating the air if every exhortation and admonition lacks a corresponding example in the life of the speaker. If there be a wide divergence between the advice to others and personal practice, the intimated *cura te ipsum* in the countenances of the hearers is justified.

An incident in the life of a certain ecclesiastic is illustrative of this point. As he was about to ascend the pulpit during a solemn function, one of his acolytes

stepped on the train of his robe. Angrily swinging about he administered a resounding cuff to the unfortunate bungler. The next moment he announced his text: "*Discite a me, quia mitis et humilis sum corde!*"

2. "For I am meek and humble of heart." Why does our Lord place so much stress on these two virtues, meekness and humility?

These words were first addressed to the disciples, and therefore to priests. He who would understand the secrets of a successful priestly career, must know that meekness and humility are the very first requisites.

A proud, obstinate, angry priest is a curse to himself and his parish.

3. "He shall not contend, nor cry out; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets." (Matt. xii, 19; cfr. Is. xlii, 2).

An occasional word spoken with force and feeling is always in place and usually brings results. But there can be little or no excuse for a voice constantly surcharged with anger and passion, so that the rectory is shunned for fear of it, the children tremblingly await it in school, and an occasional and uninformed penitent is lashed by its fury in the confessional.

Occasionally Scripture uses the word "*clamabat*" when speaking of Jesus, but it is always the outcry of a holy anguish or joy, or the strong note of a truly justified anger.

95. *The Good Samaritan—The Magna Carta  
of Christian Charity*  
(Luke x, 30 sqq.)

1. We know well this wonderful parable and have explained it frequently to others. But with what strange speed did we hurry over one point: the notorious conduct of the priest and the levite, and calm ourselves with the assurance that they were of the Old Law.

And yet this disregard, this slothful disdain for the unfortunate victim by the roadside, is not entirely unknown in our own day.

How easily an excuse is manufactured to quiet a conscience stricken by neglect of duty!

"What is that to me? Why not come to me? [how could they in that condition!]. They have only themselves to blame for their misfortune! What can I do? Do not our charitable institutions exist for that purpose?" etc., etc.

The Good Samaritan would undoubtedly have been able to find more plausible pretexts to excuse neglect.

2. With a few bold strokes, our Lord draws a picture of true Christian love, such as He desires to see it in His priests and pastors.

"He saw him." That is essential. One must have eyes and use them to see poverty and misery.

"He was moved with pity." If we were to open our eyes and look into the huts and hovels of the outcast, we, too, would be moved to pity.

And yet pity alone does not alleviate suffering.

"He went to him," *i. e.*, he interrupted his journey, put aside everything else, lingered in this dangerous spot, descended from his horse, went to the poor sufferer and not only administered fine words and admonitions, but poured oil and wine into his wounds, in short, did all that true love of neighbor demands.

Nor did he perform his task but half; he brought the unfortunate man to a safe haven, where he received proper attention and care.

"He set him upon his own beast," while he himself walked on foot to the next village inn. There he completed all arrangements and vouched for all necessary expenses. Then only did he proceed on his way.

This is perfect Christian charity, which can rightly refer to this parable as its *magna carta*. "Go and do likewise."

What marvellous fruit the seed of this parable has borne in the 1900 years of our history! And thank God, this history of charity shines brightest perhaps in clerical characters.

96. *Jesus with Martha and Mary—The Apostolate of the Home*  
(Luke x, 38 sqq.)

Many incidents in the life of our Lord fall into the category of the apostolate of the home.

1. This manifestation of pastoral zeal, particularly in the form of regular visits and friendly intercourse with the families of a parish, can, under the proper

conditions, be made especially fruitful, as it was in the life of our Lord. To be sure, it has its own difficulties and dangers to the good reputation and independence of the priest.

A cleric whose visits to certain wealthy homes are marked by a striking regularity and preference, a priest whose presence at fashionable dinners and parties becomes a matter of course, can scarcely hope to win public approval, particularly if such occasions are distinguished by their worldliness rather than by an agreeable other-worldliness. If such intercourse leaves its flecks upon the expected and accepted standard, this should cause no angry surprise.

2. On the other hand, familiar and friendly intercourse with all the families of a parish cannot but be productive of great good, provided, of course, it is distinguished by an elevated and pleasing spirituality.

This lovely incident in our Lord's life at Bethania presents an encouraging and helpful example. His actions make it clear that He shuns a false aloofness and separation from the world. We see Him as the welcome guest of a respected family, as the harbinger of joy and peace to its members, as the guest departing amidst painful regrets.

Thus it is still in Christian communities. A visit from the pastor is considered an honor and an occasion of special blessings. Indeed, the old saw is still applicable: *omne rarum carum*.

3. Then, too, our Lord comes rather to give than to receive, He comes not to enjoy the feast (*unum sufficit*), not to spend the evening in pleasant com-



pany; rather, He comes to be of service, as teacher, pastor, and master, who never under any circumstances forgets His real purpose and object.

His presence is uplifting, His speech edifying, enjoyable, free from artificiality. How well He seasons the hearty familiarity of His conversation with spiritual and religious remarks! How proper and yet efficacious is the quiet admonition which He addresses to Martha!

97. *"My Doctrine is Not Mine"—No Subjectivism  
in the Pulpit*

"My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me . . . . He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory." (John vii, 16, 18)

1. In these words Christ lays down an important rule for sound oratory. It is plain, of course, that the orator must speak from the fullness of his own intellectual life. He cannot or should not merely retail the thoughts of others. Objective facts and principles must have breathed into them the life of his own spirit that they may live for others.

He who commits to memory the thoughts of another without making them his own cannot speak heart to heart.

2. On the other hand, the priest is not the maker of the doctrine he proclaims. He may not present his own subjective ideas as regards fundamental principles. He represents Christ and must fulfill His command: "Teach what I have taught you." To him,

too, are applicable the words: "My doctrine is not my own, but His that sent me."

The principle of private interpretation, which has been so destructive of all religious standards, is un-Catholic and unorthodox.

The Catholic priest stands before his people in the name of Christ and His Church, to deliver to them, inviolate, the doctrines which have been given him to teach. If he acted otherwise, he would become like to so many modern manufacturers of cheap imitations, pinchbeck and brummagem wares that are made to sell, but not to use.

98. *Public Opinion Concerning Jesus—The Judgment of the Crowd*

"The Jews therefore sought Him on the festival day, and said: Where is He? And there was much murmuring among the multitude concerning Him." (John vii, 11 sq., 40 sqq.)

1. What do people think and say of me? inquires the pastor.

The question is natural. The shepherd desires to know what attitude his flock takes towards him. Our poor sinful nature craves praise, flattery, and the esteem of men. It shrinks in pain from adverse criticism and uncharitable judgment.

But what was the judgment of men on the infinitely good and great Shepherd Himself? Listen:

"There was much murmuring among the multitude concerning Him. For some said: He is a good man.

And others said: No, but He seduceth the people. Yet no man spoke openly of him, for fear of the Jews." (Luke vii, 12 sq.)

And again: "Some said. This is the prophet indeed. Others said: This is the Christ. But some said: Doth the Christ come out of Galilee? . . . So there arose a dissension among the people because of Him: . . . But no man laid hands upon Him." (Luke vii, 42-44).

This dissension spread to the Sanhedrin itself. Nicodemus dared to speak favorably, but was rebuffed with the retort: "Art thou also a Galilean?" (Luke vii, 52).

2. Thus we see that the most perfect ideal of the priesthood was subjected to the vacillating judgments of the masses. And yet, you wonder that *you* are not universally acclaimed and esteemed! No matter what you do and say, you will never be able to please all men. What one praises, the other censures. The favor and esteem of the masses may be likened to the turbulent waters which now raise a ship majestically aloft, now plunge it into unfathomable depths.

In what manner is the ship affected? It steadfastly holds to its course, whether the sea be favorable or unfavorable.

Thus, too, the divine Master. He keeps His eye unwaveringly on the goal ahead, and neither the cry of "Hosanna!" nor that of "*Crucifige!*" can swerve Him.

God grant you strength to do likewise!

99. *The Adulterous Woman—Jesus as the  
Prototype of the Confessor*  
(John viii, 1 sqq.)

The Sacred Writer limns for us, in this instance, a wonderful scene.

1. There stands the victim of impurity, trembling like a hunted deer surrounded by baying hounds. She is on the verge of collapsing with shame, fear, and weakness. Here stand the hypocritical Pharisees, ready to pounce upon their victim. Their expectations are plainly written on their faces; they have laid their trap so carefully that defeat this time seems impossible.

Oh! the happiness of wicked rascals if they can place the honor of a priest in jeopardy. To attain this end any means is acceptable, and only too often some woman is the star of their plot.

The irreproachable character of our Lord, His transparent sanctity, His evident nobility, were, however, beyond the range of their artillery.

2. According to their verdict, the adulteress must die. The Master leaves the verdict stand, but unexpectedly turns the weapon upon them. Very well then, if that is the law, does it not also apply to you? Can it be that you would have us believe that you are innocent? "He that is without sin among you, let him cast a stone at her." (John viii, 7).

He calls attention to these whited sepulchres, and His all-seeing eye pierces their dark souls like a flash of lightning in the midnight storm. He recognizes

them as an adulterous race. They are dumfounded, struck as by a bolt from the clear sky. He has laid bare the innermost secrets of their lives. Are they convinced, by the manifestation of these mysterious powers, that He is omniscient? One thing is certain: in a moment the positions are exchanged. The bold accusers are now the discovered criminals! One by one they slink away from the penetrating eye of Christ.

3. The penitent outcast stands before Him.

Let us observe His manner in the rôle of confessor towards her. "Hath no man condemned thee?"—"No man, Lord."—"Neither will I condemn thee. Go now and sin no more." (John viii, 10 sq.) The admonition of the confessor is short and pithy, but given in a manner and with an authority that immediately move the heart. Here again the Messianic prophecy stands fulfilled. "The bruised reed He shall not break and the smoking flax He shall not quench." (Is. xlii, 3).

#### 100. *The Light of the World—Natural and Supernatural Light*

"I am the light of the world; he that follows me, walketh not in darkness." (John viii, 12).

1. Light is one of the most wonderful gifts of God and as such serves as an excellent symbol of our Lord.

Light is an element in teaching. It gives us the means of seeing things as they are, in their ugliness as well as in their beauty.

Without light all things would be but little known to us.

Light is a pathfinder. It makes clear our path, reveals dangers, opens up before us the abyss, and points out the obstacles in our way. To wander in darkness is uncanny and dangerous. The wayfarer throws off the dull spell of the long night hours when Old Sol draws back the curtain and spreads his effulgence over all. Numberless ships have been lost because no lighthouse revealed the rocks.

Light is a comforter. How the sick man rejoices after a long fretful night of pain, as the morning sun pierces the gloom with radiant joy! How the criminal exults in his dark, damp cell, when the sun delivers a belated message of gladness and hope! Darkness depresses, casts down, makes fearful; light encourages, enlivens, makes joyful.

2. "I am the light." Your light should be a reflection of the divine light. For "you are the light of the world."

Are you in very fact a shining light in your own parish, in that little world of which you are the spiritual ruler? How much light and illumination is shed by your instructions and sermons? Day after day children and adults feed upon your words. Do they contain nourishment for their poor famished souls? Do they illumine their darkness, dispel their sorrows, and comfort them in their misfortunes? Are they instructive and full of unction? Impossible if they

are the vaporings of an unprepared and unstocked mind.

"He that followeth me walketh not in darkness." This is a cardinal characteristic of the priest who is a priest after God's own heart.

3. Every community should have two sources of light,—the sun, the source of earthly light and life, which returns every day unfailingly, dispels the darkness, makes radiant the hills, floods the valleys, brings cheer to every home, bids adieu to winter and welcomes spring in all its glory and beauty—and the sun of true faith embodied in the Catholic priest, spreading its light in the darkness all about, bringing peace and consolation to the sick-bed, and renewing all in the faith of Christ.

#### 101. *Soldiers of Christ—Pointed Polemics* (John vii 11 sqq.; viii, 12 sqq.)

1. Here we see the shepherd battling with wolves. Words that once dripped with the honey of consolation, now rush on in barbed flight.

Perhaps you are tempted to pass over this incident in Holy Writ as being beside the point.

But is not this battle of our Lord with the hypocritical Pharisees, the agnostic Sadducees, and a characterless Herodianism, still raging in the Church, with even greater violence than before?

Is it not the duty of the priest to throw himself into this conflict, wherever it rages in his territory?



Here again the example of the Master must light the way and be our rule of conduct.

2. How does Christ meet His opponents?

a) With remarkable courage and fortitude—one against all, and upon their own ground, in their own city and temple, in the public squares.

Whence comes the incomparable power, the absolute sureness, which so profoundly impresses men?

It is the consciousness of His exalted nature and calling.

“I know whence I came, and whither I go . . . And if I do judge, my judgment is true, because I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me.” (John viii, 14 sqq.).

b) He speaks with calm self-possession in spite of the greatest provocation. True, He speaks pointedly and directly, but always objectively and without vituperation.

Lack of calmness and self-possession has undone the zealous work of many a priest, who, in a fateful moment, gave utterance to indiscreet and ill-advised words.

Every storm of anger and passion is a sign of weakness and places a dangerous weapon in the hands of one's opponents; it is the Achillean heel of many a polemist.

3. What our Lord here says holds true also of present-day Pharisees and Sadducees. “You are from beneath, I am from above.” (John viii, 23).

These words are a succinct characterization of

modern indifferentism. It is obvious that between this and the doctrines of Christ, there is a polaric and irreconcilable difference.

"If I speak the truth you will believe me not." (John viii, 45). Exactly. They *will* not believe, and hence their eyes are shut against the most radiant sunlight. This is a common phenomenon at the present time.

102. *Cure of the Man Born Blind—Tactics of  
Unbelief—Persecution of Converts*  
(John ix, 1-14)

1. When the unbeliever witnesses a miraculous deed, he is non-plussed. At first he attempts to deny the fact by bringing testimony against it. The practice has not changed to this day. Where the facts cannot be argued away, recourse is had to ridicule and railery, and the priests with their priest-ridden people are brushed aside with a sweeping gesture of contempt and disdain.

2. Very striking is the story of the man born blind as repeated in the lives of great numbers of yearly converts to the Church.

At a stroke of divine grace the blind man had his sight restored. What had been buried in the depth of a never-ending night, is now suddenly flooded with the light of heaven and all things are made clear and his heart rejoices: "And I went, I washed, and I see." (John ix, 11). But in the chalice of his joy there are drops of bitter wormwood. The news of

the incident becomes the gossip of the city, until it pervades the chambers of those in power. They demand an explanation, and for this purpose summon the parents and relatives of the blind man. "We know not, ask himself," is their answer. (John ix, 21).

The man is put through the third degree." "Give glory to God; we know that this man is a sinner." (John ix, 24). He must be convinced that he is the victim of hallucinations! But their machinations are in vain; what has occurred is plainly the work of God. "Unless this man were of God, he could not do anything." (John ix, 33).

As a last resource they employ ridicule and abuse. But he is impervious to their machinations, and thus, at their wit's end, they "cast him out." (John ix, 34).

So also is the convert,—an outcast from home, society, the synagogue, branded as a back-slider and a traitor.

He needs the help, the consolation, and the encouragement of a true friend who will help him in his extremity.

Behold, dear pastor, how the Master receives the outcast. Go thou and do likewise.

### 103. *The Hostile Sanhedrin—Influencing Public Opinion*

(John vii, 11 sqq.; viii, 12 sqq.; x, 22 sqq.)

The circumstances surrounding the various Jewish holidays and feasts recall a tragic fact which is

being constantly repeated throughout the ages, namely, the scandal given to the masses by a corrupt and pagan ruling class.

1. The Sanhedrin was a power in the land. Its power radiated from the Temple, the nation's sanctuary, and passed down to the lowest members of society. Indeed, the poorer classes were entirely dependent upon its good will, for the distribution of the alms was one of its functions. He who refused to obey was stricken from the lists and threatened with expulsion from the Synagogue. This despotic power was employed in the conflict with Christ.

Their efforts were not fruitless. The parents of the man born blind are chary of making the incident public. And of the people it was said: "No man spoke openly of him, for fear of the Jews." (John vii, 13).

But the incident did not end here. In order to discredit still more the teachings and miracles of the Master, slanderous reports were circulated as follows:

"He drives out the evil spirits through Beelzebub," or, "Shall the Messiah come out of Galilee? Does not Holy Writ say that the Messiah would arise from the race of David and from Bethlehem? And there arose a division among them."

That is the tyranny of public opinion and perverted propaganda.

2. Is it not the same at the present time? Modern industry has brought about the absolute dependence of the masses upon the wish and will of small finan-

cial rings. There is the same tyrannous overlordship and despotic ruling.

Modern society, with its pagan industrialism, has subjected education to its power. The unlimited activity of the press for evil has been enslaved. The half-educated and ignorant masses are thus being constantly organized into a body, hating or at least forgetting Christ and Christianity.

At every turn the priest in a large city parish is made conscious of the tragic destruction wrought by the press. What must be done is clear. There is need of a strong, well edited, widely read Catholic press. Of what value are sermons and instructions, when they are immediately counteracted in the home by prurient and pagan newspapers?

104. *Jesus, the Good Shepherd—A Picture of  
Ideal Pastoral Care*

"I am the Good Shepherd." (John x, 11).

Our Lord here paints for us, in a few masterful strokes, the picture of a good shepherd and pastor of souls. The priest should carefully contemplate this representation and imprint it indelibly on his mind.

1. The good shepherd "calls his sheep by name." A true pastor considers his congregation more than a mere numerical aggregation of men. He loves and knows them all, with their virtues and faults; he interests himself in each one individually, sharing their joys and sorrows. A true bond of love and esteem unites shepherd and flock.

## 2. "He leads them and proceeds them."

He leads them by his earnest yet forbearing instructions from the pulpit, which point out to them the way to eternal Life. His cheerful and encouraging tone makes easier their difficult journey.

He leads them by his admonitions in the confessional, where he speaks to each bared soul, individually, dispensing comfort, warning, instruction and consolation.

He leads them by means of his example, his priestly character, his solid piety, irreproachable reputation and self-forgetfulness, which so visibly embody his teachings to them.

## 3. "They know him and he knows them."

The children approach him with affection; the sick consider him their hope and consolation and greet his regular visits like rays of sunshine; the poor and the outcast look up to him as their only guide in this vale of tears and tribulations; the laborer believes him to be the prophet of a Christian social order in society, and the poorest sheep outside the fold knows him, for the shepherd is acquainted with the by-ways and their wanderers.

4. "They follow him, because they know his voice,"—the voice which is the expression of his heart, his fatherly love and care. They follow him because they believe in him implicitly and feel that he is their best friend and father.

5. "I am come, that they might have life and have it more abundantly." How appropriate is this text for an introductory sermon to a congregation. For-

fortunate the fold to which the incoming shepherd can speak thus whole-heartedly.

A new life blossoms forth as he zealously exhorts, forms organisations and associations, conducts missions, etc. This is a second spring for the community. Everywhere there is activity, in the confessional, at the communion-rail, in the instructions, services and family circles. Thus it was as the Curé of Ars, Ketteler, Rudigier and our own Neumann and Kenrick took their places. "I am come that they may have life in abundance."

6. And now we come to the high light in this picture:

"I am the good shepherd, I give my life for my sheep."

Love of sacrifice and self-immolation, even to death, are the most beautiful characteristics of a shepherd. And, thank God, the history of the Church contains a great number of such heroic lives.

Such shepherds were the first popes and martyr-bishops of the early Church, a Cyprian and a Cyril, an Ignatius and a Polycarp, and many others.

Such shepherds were the martyred missionaries in all lands and of all times, such were the pioneer missionaries who came to our own shores, such were the great numbers who sacrificed their lives in accidents, calamities, and catastrophes; such are the heroic souls who strive and struggle fiercely and intensely, in the battle for Christ, to the very last drop of their strength. "Greater love than this no man hath." "I give my life for my sheep."



105. *The Bad Shepherd—Ignominious Pastoral Types*  
(John x, 1-21).

Alongside of the picture of the Good Shepherd, our Lord places, by way of contrast, that of the bad shepherd.

1. The bad shepherds are, first of all, the thieves and robbers. "He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up another way, the same is a thief and a robber." (John x, 1).

These are the intruders, who slip into the sheepfold without vocation or mission; "they come but for to steal." (John x, 10). Also those who bear the brand of simony upon their brows, for whom the priesthood is a business, who do not consider what they can do for their sheep, but rather what the sheep can do for them, who are constantly exacting heavy tributes from an overburdened people. He who reads the history of simony in the Middle Ages, the Goanese transactions and the South-American scandals, etc., knows how tragically the Church has suffered at the hands of this sort of shepherds.

2. Others come to murder and to destroy. These are the priests who, by their sinful lives and example, murder souls, or poison them with erroneous teachings. The history of the Church is unfortunately not free from such deplorable incidents.

3. "But a stranger they follow not, but fly from him, because they know not the voice of strangers." (John x, 5).

Among such must be numbered the ecclesiastical martinets, despots, and overlords, who conceive their vocation in the light of a beaurocrat, or generalissimo, who hold themselves aloof from the common herd and shun all wholesome familiarity. Such a pastor remains a stranger among strangers. The people avoid him; he is unwelcome in every circle. He is approached only in case of absolute necessity. "They fly from him."

4. There is, finally, the hireling,—he that is not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not. "He seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth and scattereth the sheep." (John x, 12).

The true shepherd is bound to his flock by the ties of love; the hireling by the bonds of remuneration and compensation.

As far as the condition of the sheep is concerned, he cares but little. Their death, fortune or misfortune, health or sickness, are immaterial to him. But the perquisites, the fees, may they ever grow more abundant!

Let an epidemic descend upon the flock, and the hireling flees and deserts his sheep in their hour of need. Let the wolf appear—modern paganism, a corrupt press, an unjust social order, persecution, etc.—and the hireling's courage fails him; he cannot take his place in front of his flock; his only thought is for his own safety.

What sorrow comes over the countenance of the Master as He beholds the sad picture of the future!

106. *The "Other Sheep"—The Sheep Outside the Fold*

"And other sheep I have, that are not of this fold; them also I must bring. . . ." (John x, 16).

Who are these "other sheep," dear pastor, in the immediate vicinity of your parish?

1. They are the poor outside the fold. The good shepherd seeks them out, the hireling disregards them. Then, there are the transients, those who form the many streams of unattached humanity that ebb and flow across the face of the earth; and again the so-called "modern," "liberal" Catholics who are superior to the routine of parish life and regulations; and, finally, that great body of non-Catholics who, though outside the Church, yet are of her spirit.

2. The largest class of all, however, yet remains to be mentioned, namely, the many millions of pagans and their Protestant brothers in foreign lands, who must be brought home so that there may be "one fold and one shepherd."

We must emulate the spirit of the great chief Shepherd, whose heart embraces all men, in all lands, and throughout all ages. His love of neighbor is not confined by geographical lines, but includes all humanity.

107. *"Lord, Teach us to Pray"—The Pastor as the Paragon of Prayer*  
(Luke xi, 1)

1. The Master prays. He has withdrawn from

the multitude to lift His Heart in prayerful communion with His Father. The disciples had been piously observant, and when their Master had finished, they reverently approached Him and pleaded for instructions in the sacred art of prayer: "Lord, teach us to pray."

Your people, too, are pleading with you to teach them to pray. Without consciously laying yourself out for edification, there is no better means of instructing them than through your own example. In your visits to the Blessed Sacrament, in the recital of the rosary, in the reading of the office, but above all in the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice, you can teach the art of devout and pious prayer. *Verba movent, exempla trahunt*. Do not give the lie to your instructions by the way you yourself pray!

"Lord, teach us to pray," plead your own disciples and spiritual children. Why tell them only what and why they must pray? This they already know and firmly believe. The difficulty lies in the manner of praying!

2. Prayer is an art, and as such has its laws, rules, and methods, which must be learned before accomplishment comes to the artist.

Of good will there is plenty. But most persons are ignorant of the correct methods. How eagerly they devour any concrete instruction which shows how to make prayer richer, deeper, and more effectual by well-defined precautions and the legitimate use of a scheme of association of ideas.

3. "Lord, teach us to pray." Quite naturally, if

the spiritual leader still grovels in the lower forms of prayer and seldom lifts himself above a cold and superficial recitation of verbal formulae, he can do little or nothing to teach the difficult art of fervent prayer and meditation to his people.

Who has not seen a bent and broken form, a beautiful maiden, a strong and stalwart man, wholly given over to pious prayer? They were far advanced over their leaders.

It is one of the divine mysteries how the Holy Spirit occasionally leads willing souls to the heights of intimate contemplation and union with God. "Lord, teach us to pray."

108. *The Impetuous Friend—An Inscription for the Priest's House*

"Knock and it shall be opened unto you." (Luke xi, 9).

1. It is clear from this incident in Holy Writ that persistent, impetuous pleading in no wise hinders conformity with the will of God. We are advised to plead, seek, and knock, as did this friend, and to persist in doing so until we have been admitted.

And now if such imprecation before God is held up to us as not only desirable, but necessary, what must be said of the approachableness of a pastor of souls?

Surely there are not lacking opportunities for the shepherd of souls to emulate the heavenly Father and gratify the wishes of a persistent pleader.

Oft the call comes in the middle of a night of much

needed rest, or there is an ill-judged interruption at meal-time, or at some other unseasonable hour of the day or night, such as might be expected from those who lack tact and feeling for the fitness of things.

And yet, in spite of this, the rectory should ever be open to welcome all visitors. Over the lintel should be inscribed: "He who asks here receives; who seeks, finds; who knocks, to him shall it be opened."

2. "And which of you, if he ask his father bread, will he give him a stone? Or a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?" (Luke xi, 11).

Can it be that the spiritual host of a parish community ever gave to his children a stone instead of bread, a serpent in place of fish, a scorpion for an egg?

In matter of fact, egotism, covetousness, and pride in a priest will set his heart against the most crying needs that stretch out wasting hands in supplication to him.

"Let them apply to public charity if they are in need!" he rasps, as he slams the door in the face of another hopeless beggar. Are these actualities? Would to God they were not!

### 109. *Delivery From a Blind and Dumb Devil— Difficult Cases of Conscience*

1. "Then was offered to him one possessed with a devil, blind and dumb: and he healed him, so that he spoke and saw." (Matt. xii, 22).

It is not uncommon for the priest in the confes-

sional or at the bedside to be confronted by persons who are blind and dumb, or whom evil spirits hold in bondage. These souls are so out of tune with God's universe that they are unable to respond under normal conditions. Their spiritual nervous system appears to be isolated from all ordinary influences. It is almost impossible to make even a beginning with them.

2. "And when he had cast out the devil, the dumb spoke." (Luke xi, 14).

It is necessary, first of all, to drive out the evil spirits, and in this instance it is usually the spirit of mistrust, of a misplaced reserve, which would speak but cannot find the right word.

Here careful, patient guidance is necessary. One harsh word, one tactless remark, one rash demand, an ill-timed imposition or the least sign of impatience may end all hope of a free and easy communication between penitent and confessor. The process of dealing with such persons may be likened to a major operation. Cutting into the living tissues is impossible without ether and chloroform. A slight nervousness and all might be lost.

3. The priest as confessor is much like a skilled surgeon; both must have extensive experience, strong nerves, a steady hand, and a mastery over the feelings of nausea and disgust which gaping wounds arouse.

It is related of a missionary that he heard the confession of a penitent who had been remiss in his duties for many years. His litany of spiritual woes was almost endless. The confessor listened calmly and patiently to the end. Only then did he offer a few words



of admonition and encouragement. "I thank you, Reverend Father," said the humble penitent, when the priest had dismissed him. "You are the third to whom I have come. The other confessors would not allow me to finish, but interrupted my confession with harsh and angry words. Finally I said to myself: I will make one more attempt. I thank you sincerely that you have received me so kindly and listened to me with so much patience."

"And when He had cast out the devil, the dumb spoke."

#### 110. *Calumny—The Campaign of Slander Against the Church and Her Priests*

"But the Pharisees said: By the prince of devils he casteth out devils." (Matt. ix, 34).

1. Did they believe this themselves? By no means. The absurdity of it was too palpable. But hatred, envy, and jealousy had withered every tendril of truth and justice in their souls.

2. They hated Jesus. Why? Because He towered above them, because His spirituality outshone theirs, because He spoke as one having power and authority, because, for these reasons, the people flocked to him, because they were powerless before the grandeur of His personality, the marvellousness of His deeds, because, in short, they were unable to uphold the charges against Him. They snatched at the weapons of hate, the poisoned dagger of calumny.

"Lie, lie, lie, each time a little will take effect."

Voltaire was not the first to write out this receipt.

3. There is nothing more disgusting than this campaign of slander undertaken by the Pharisees against our Lord. And it has been continued from their day, through all the ages, down to our own time. Though there are, unfortunately, occasional instances of justification, yet it is largely a campaign fed by blind and unreasoning hatred. It is only necessary to peruse the daily press, the publications of anti-Catholic organisations, and the sectarian slander sheets to be convinced that the same spirit prevails to-day that vented its diabolical spleen against Christ 2,000 years ago.

There is nothing too low or too mean but what it makes grist for their mill. All the old cards of the Pharisees are played again.

"He corrupts the masses; he has an unclean spirit; he is a reveller, a tax-dodger; he deceives the people by his charlatanism," etc., etc.

All attempts to meet these lies with contradictions and explanations help but little: they keep bobbing up continually. There is but one ray of consolation left: "If they persecute me, they will persecute you also, for the servant is no greater than the Master."

### III. *Caustic Words—Laudable Self-Defense*

1. There are times when our Lord bears all things in silence, as the lamb before the executioner; but here He retorts, for the welfare of the deceived masses demands it.

"There is a time to keep silence, and a time to speak," says the Wise Man (Eccles. iii, 7).

Priests and religious should bear silently all attacks against their person. But if the honor of the people, or of the Church, or an undertaking which might be affected by lies and slander, are at stake, then silence is out of place.

2. The Master answers in a purely objective manner. He slashes the net-work of lies with the blade of His inexorable logic. It is only then that He proceeds to the attack and thunders down upon them with: "Brood of vipers, how can you speak good of any one. . . . ?"

The violence of His attack, which is intensified by His stern countenance, stuns his enemies. They no longer dare to meet Him in the open. Only behind closed doors are violent measures resolved upon.

3. There are occasions and circumstances which justify a clerical uprising, either singly or in a body. The usual calm and reserve must occasionally be thrown off. Self-suppression and annihilation and a meek surrender in the face of every attack cannot be justified by reference to example of the Master.

Why is it that the clergy of some countries have so little influence in public life, that they are looked upon as good targets in every fray. Is there any doubt but that it arises from this false policy of silence, this lack of the preparedness, courage, and resourcefulness which the warfare of our day demands.

The people naturally hold fast to the party which

can defend itself the best and fight its battles with the greatest success.

“Successful combat wins esteem.”

112. *By the Fruit You Shall Know the Tree*  
—and the Priest.

“Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit and the evil tree bringeth forth evil fruit.” (Matt. vii, 17; Luke vi, 43 sqq.)

1. This parable is applicable to the life of our Divine Lord: and He uses it as a telling argument against His enemies and their accusations.

If you doubt my words, then believe my works and my life. “Can an evil tree bring forth evil fruit?”

How beautiful is this Tree in the garden of Israel, overshadowing all others, more lovely than the fairest, laden with golden fruit! How sweet this fruit, how refreshing and nourishing! A life lived in the protecting shade of its love is indeed a happy one.

And yet, this is the Tree that the enemy would uproot and destroy, because it overshadows their evil growth, burdened with bitter, poisonous fruits!

*“Venite et eradamus eum.”*

2. The priest may draw consolation from this parable.

He too should be as a Tree of Life in the garden of his parish, an example to others, bearing good fruit and providing refreshing shade for his people.

“Its leaves were most beautiful, and its fruit exceeding much: and in it was food for all: under it

dwelt cattle, and beasts, and in the branches thereof the fowls of the air had their abode and all flesh did eat of it." (Daniel iv, 9).

3. "By their fruits you shall know them."

By what means and in what manner do people judge priests?

According to the visible, palpable things, the bark, the leaves and the buds? In the beginning they will form their judgments according to externals. "He speaks so well, he is so friendly and affable." The first meetings are propitious, and the good word is passed on from mouth to mouth.

But soon the promises of spring are blasted. The buds of priestly zeal are destroyed! The starving people await the harvest, but in vain. The fruit has been nipped, frost-bitten or worm-eaten, in the bud.

On the other hand, how frequently the average seminarist develops into the zealous, well-beloved pastor, who is a tremendous power for good among his people, in spite, perhaps, of an uncouth, unpleasing exterior.

"By their fruits you shall know them."

### 113. *The Unclean Spirit—Recidivi—The Power of Association*

"When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through places without water, seeking rest; and not finding, he saith: I will return into my house whence I came out. And coming he findeth it swept and garnished. Then he goeth and taketh

with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first." (Luke xi, 24 sqq.; Matt. xii, 43 sqq.)

1. Our Lord in the above parable paints for us a picture which every pastor of souls recognizes as the likeness of incidents he has often witnessed.

He has had a mission conducted in his parish. All seems well. Even his renegade children attend. How beautiful the house which has been swept clean and decorated!

But alas! the demons of gluttony, of hatred, of impurity, soon find their way back, and "the last state of that man is worse than the first."

And then there are the *recidivi*, with all the cares and disillusionments which they bring to the heart of the priest!

2. How tragic the application of this parable to the priest himself! He had fallen, fallen deeply. Then came the retreat, a struggle followed, and in a moment of intense effort, he overcame the enemy.

The house was cleaned, redecorated, made liveable again; there was new life, new joy, new hope. For a time all was well; the victory seemed permanent. But alas! the demon returned, and in a moment of relaxed vigilance took possession with seven other companions—and here, too, the "last state is worse than the first."

3. A further lesson from this parable should not be overlooked. In order to increase his strength, the unclean spirit unites forces with others of his

kind. "He taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself."

Association is the strongest weapon of evil spirits and the means by which they vanquish many a stronghold. Thus it has always been. The individual heretic would perhaps have accomplished little, but he united forces with others and thus organized a dangerous sect. Individual humanists would perhaps have had little influence, but they united with others, founded schools and became the leading spirits in their realm for two hundred years. So, too, with the Encyclopedists, the Illuminati, etc., and so, too, in our own day, which makes so much of association and organisation. Therefore, the pressing need of strong, well-knit organizations among the Catholic people. The spirit of union must pervade our ranks. It is one of the greatest needs of the day.

#### 114. *The Parable of the Two Blind Men— The Confessor of Priests*

"If the blind lead the blind, both fall into the pit."  
(Matt. xv, 14; cfr. Luke vi, 39).

1. The priest, too, needs a mentor, a spiritual guide, a good confessor, who can direct him gently but firmly in the way of spiritual life.

What a blessing a good confessor is, what a boon to life and to life's last hour.

If you have discovered such a one, hold fast to him. "*Tenui eum nec dimittam.*" (Cant. of Cant., iii, 4).



Frequent change of confessors is as harmful to the health of the soul as frequent change of doctors is to the health of the body. (St. Charles Borromeo)

Can a confessor give you competent advice when he does not know and understand you?

2. Only the tepid and sinful priest shuns an earnest, sincere confessor.

He fears such a confessor would disagreeably rouse him and unflinchingly command him to "up-root," "chop away" his faults. That is just what the erring, fallen sinner shuns and fears.

He proceeds, therefore, to find as his guide a blind leader, a priest as careless and sinful as himself, who has nothing to place before him for emulation, who is as unwilling to operate as the other is to be operated upon.

And so the deception is mutual, the two go arm in arm to their destruction.

"Can the blind lead the blind? do they not both fall into the ditch?" (Luke vi, 39).

### 115. *The Glorification of Mary—The Happy Lot of the Priest's Mother*

"And it came to pass, as He spoke these things, a certain woman from the crowd, lifting up her voice, said to him: Blessed is the womb that bore thee, and the breasts that gave thee nourishment." (Luke xi, 27 sq.)

1. Words, like incidents, are sometimes noteworthy. This is the first time since the marriage feast at

Cana that the Mother of our Lord is mentioned or referred to in connection with His life, the first time that a ray of His glory falls upon her.

A woman from the crowd raises her voice in praise of Mary. Women are usually more susceptible religiously, more impulsive in the expression of religious sentiments. The immediate occasion of this public praise is not quite clear; probably it was joy over Christ's wonderful manifestations and His saving instructions.

2. Is not this same scene repeated in the life of the Catholic priest? What an influence on his life is a good pious mother! She nourished his budding vocation in early youth; she preserved it in her heart as a golden hope. And, now, finally the longed-for day has arrived. For the first time her son ascends the altar; for the first time he takes the pulpit, filled with the zeal of a newly ordained levite. His words fall upon her ears with ineffable meaning, her whole soul is flooded with a joy that spends itself in tears. All eyes search her out, and on every lip are the words: "Blessed is the womb that bore thee . . ."

Yes, blessed is the mother that has reared a good, pious priest. How beautifully she reflects his glory, his fortune, his successes and follows his every step with motherly pride! "Blessed the womb that bore thee."

116. *Pharisaical Rectitude—The Woe Spoken to the Clergy of Israel*

“Woe to you scribes and Pharisees!” (Matt. xxiii, 23; Luke xi, 39 sqq.)

Our Lord here unmercifully scourges Pharisaical pseudo-righteousness. His fiery words are addressed to the clergy of Israel, but they should find quaking hearts in our own time.

Why this holy anger of our Lord? It is aroused by,

1. *Pharisaical hypocrisy.*

“Because you make clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but within you are full of rapine and uncleanness.” Matt. xxiii, 25).

Pharisaism had falsified moral values, established false ethical standards, and set up a worldly ideal of rectitude. It sought to please the eye of man, who can be deceived by outward appearances, unlike the infallible eye of God, who sees what is within the soul.

“*Phariseis,*” comments Ludolfus, “*similes sunt clerici, qui bene tonso capite et rasa corona in veste alba et munda et lotis manibus accedunt ad altare, intus pleni avaritia et iniquitate aliisque immunditiis implicati, legem Dei postponentes et traditiones hominum in exterioribus solícite custodientes.*”

2. *Pharisaical striving for the praise and esteem of men.*

They occupy the first and most conspicuous place in the synagogue, where they can be seen by all and

seek to attract public attention. There is an ostentatious display and proud parade of spirituality!

3. *The hypocrisy of gilded sepulchres.*

Beautiful exteriors, golden titles, glittering emblems, hide the interior decay.

"And men that walk over are not aware." (Luke xi, 44).

Fortunately, our people do not know the interior life of some of the priests to whom they pay respect and reverence. If they did, they would turn away in disgust and fly from this rottenness.

Truly it is well that all is not uncovered to the people. God makes use of human instruments for the dispensation of His graces; these cannot be dependent upon the inviolability of the instrument. That would bring God in dependence upon His creatures. And yet it does throw into relief the tragic incongruity, the striking contrast between reality and appearance.

4. *Egotistical severity.*

"Woe to you lawyers also, because you load men with burdens which they cannot bear, and you yourselves touch not the packs with one of your fingers." (Luke xi, 46).

You yourself seek leniency in the confessional, though perhaps you are severe and unbending towards your own penitents.

You place before the people a high ideal of penance, fasting and mortification, though you yourself perhaps pass lightly over them. You demand of the little ones close and constant attention during instruc-

tions and sermons, though you make little effort at being interesting, clear, and understandable.

You inveigh against the spirit of pleasure and comfort-seeking, yet you deny yourself nothing, forego none of the pleasures and comforts that are within your reach.

You demand respect and reverence in your charges, yet you deal with them in a boorish and insolent manner.

You exact full measure in tithes and support, yet you are niggardly in giving to other churches and missionaries.

#### 5. *Perversers of the truth.*

"Woe to you lawyers, for you have taken away the key of knowledge." (Luke xi, 52).

They falsified and misinterpreted the word of God, upon which the entire religious life of the people was founded; they rationalized the Messianic prophecies, stripped the Sacred Writings of their divine character, and buried the key to this treasure-house of salvation.

Is not this also the *modus operandi* of modern Rationalistic exegetes? They interpret the word of God in the dimmed light of the human intellect. They have lost the key of true wisdom and knowledge, and they no longer recognize the supernatural character of these sources of revelation.

#### 6. *Bad example.*

"You yourselves have not entered in, and those that were entering in, you have hindered." (Luke xi, 52).

What a terrible inscription, this, for the monument of a priest and pastor of souls! He should be a guide and leader to Heaven, but through his bad example he has hindered many from entering. What a sad verification do these words not find in the history of the Church! Not only individuals and parishes, but entire districts and nations have entered upon the wrong path, because they lacked true guidance, because bad priests had brought religion into evil repute.

### 117. *The Exposure—The Dark Secret of the Priest*

“Nothing is covered that shall not be revealed: nor hid, that shall not be known.” (Matt. x, 26; cfr. Luke xii, 2; Mark iv, 22).

1. This terrifying tragedy of guilt finds its counterpart in the life of a bad priest. He comes upon evil ways, allows himself to degenerate into flabby weakness, to drift into secret, sinful habits.

The thought that his sin might become known haunts him at first. But he gradually becomes bolder, and the hope that he may keep his evil ways secret sends him farther on the way to destruction.

2. Truly, much will not be revealed until the last judgment. And yet, how much is uncovered to the light already in our own day! A bad conscience is gradually reflected in the eyes and countenance of the evil-doer. Suspicions are aroused, and lynx-eyed mongers of clerical scandal are active. The tale grows; it passes from the inner circle to the outer and soon is shouted from the house-tops.

"The hidden things are revealed, and brought to the light of day," and so what was once a spotless, honorable clerical life is destroyed like a village razed in a storm, like a wheat-field laid low by a terrific hail-storm.

"Behold I come against thee, saith the Lord of hosts: and I will discover thy shame to thy face, and will shew thy nakedness to the nations, and thy shame to kingdoms." (Nahum iii, 5).

That is the just retribution which overtakes many a priest who has misused his sacred privileges and the high esteem of his calling.

#### 118. *Fear of God and Human Respect—Apostolic Candor*

"And I say to you, my friends: Be not afraid of them who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. . . . Fear ye him, who after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell. Yea, I say to you, fear him." (Luke xii, 4 sq.)

1. "I say to you, my friends." These words are addressed to the disciples, and through them to all priests.

This public, cutting denunciation of the Pharisees and Scribes by the Master had filled the disciples with fear.

They had, like all other Jews, looked upon the exalted position of men, who had been the guardians of their race's sacred treasures, with reverence and esteem. The candid words our Lord had spoken sounded



strange to their ears. Their hearts quavered at the thought of the consequences of this declaration of hostilities. The conception of Apostolic candor, which was to be theirs at the full consciousness of their divine mission, had not yet been called forth in their minds.

Our Lord teaches them, in this instance, that an apostle should not fear death or the displeasure of the mighty if the occasion calls for a definite and unyielding stand.

2. This declaration has produced a race of heroes. Among the very first of the long line of noble warriors are the Apostles, whom we have just seen in the throes of a terrible fear. At a later day they will appear fearlessly, like Peter and Andrew, before the Sanhedrin and the king, prepared, if need be, to suffer and die joyfully for Christ, their Lord.

Then follows the age of the martyrs, the preface of whose history might well be the words of the Master.

Nor does the race die out. It lives on in the lives of the popes, from the first to Gregory VII, to Pius VI and VII, down to Pius IX and his spirited: "*Non possumus.*" The ranks are filled with numberless bishops, beginning with Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp, and Athanasius, to Thomas à Becket, Clemens August and the confessors of our own day.

No calling numbers so many martyrs and heroes as that of priest and bishop.

That is its eternal glory.

119. *Loyal Witnesses—Clerical Deserters*

“Everyone therefore that shall confess me before men, I will also confess him before my Father who is in heaven; but he that . . . ” (Matt. x, 32; cfr. Mark viii, 38; Luke ix, 26; xii, 8).

1. This loyalty, it may be thought, is quite natural in a priest. For his position and garb is in the nature of a public manifestation. That is, in general, true. And yet the uniform of a soldier or the banner he carries, does not guarantee perseverance in battle.

2. We may classify denial of Christ, His Church and doctrine, under two heads: (1) public and direct denial, (2) private and indirect denial. Among the latter we must number such shameful clerical manifestations as the fear of combating modern religious, ethical, philosophical, theological and sociological vagaries, the fear of meeting higher criticism, and the fear of repudiating the demands of pseudo-science, lest perchance one compromise oneself with friends, Catholic or non-Catholic, who are proponents of some or all of these ideas. It would be disconcerting, to say the least, to be known as a “Martyr of Roman Intolerance.” Rather yield a point here and there, gloss over the glaring inconsistencies of the opponents and be still, oh! very still, when they tread upon dangerous ground. Such priests are clandestine traitors to Christ and His Church!

“But he that shall deny me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God.” (Luke xii, 9).

120. *Inheritance Quarrels—Aloofness From Commercial Transactions*

“Master, speak to my brother that he divide the inheritance with me. But He said: Man, who hath appointed me judge, or divider, over you” (Luke xii, 13-14).

1. It is clear from this that our Lord held himself aloof from all commercial transactions. The question is, whether this is a universal norm and rule for His Apostles and their successors.

The pastor, who is a true shepherd of his flock, is frequently called upon for advice and counsel in matters of business, particularly by the poor and unfortunate, who have come to look upon him as their sole guide and true friend. Surely there is nothing amiss under circumstances like these to do all that he can within reason and good taste. He could scarcely do otherwise.

But to participate and take sides in a quarrel over an inheritance is to jeopardize his position and authority, make way for divisions among his people against himself, and put a low value on his priestly dignity. “Who has appointed me judge, or divider, over you?” No tie too sacred but that money can break it. Money carries enmity between brothers, sows hatred and jealousy and enmity between family and family, and is the cause of many an unhappy division in families and parishes.

To be sure, the priest can and should, in certain circumstances, attempt to mediate and reconcile, but

he should never involve himself directly in vexed questions of inheritance. He becomes the target of a thousand suspicions if there is the least evidence that he is intent upon his own personal gain.

2. The danger of being involved in such suspicions and scandals is ever present in the life of a priest who has not made it clear to his family and relations that a certain independence exists on his part and must be respected.

But if he still remains the "Reverend Uncle, Brother, etc.," if he has turned over the rectory to the whole tribe who look upon it as a family spoil, then, surely, will he be drawn into every dispute, the victim and the slave of family politics and divisions. "Who has appointed me judge, or divider, over you?" the Master warns.

3. In another sense, the priest should be an administrator of inheritances. What he has come into possession of, while a priest of God, does not belong to his family. He should administer it so as to benefit the Church and her work. It is surely a scandal when, upon the death of a priest, his relatives swoop down like hawks upon his effects and divide them among themselves without a thought of the Church, the poor, the press, and the many other worthy objects of charity.

## 121. *The Parable of the Rich Man—Clerical Misers* (Luke xii, 13-21)

1. Is this parable, as might be thought, directed only

to men of the world? Let us read it again and then pass in memory over the countries and the centuries and review the history of the clergy through the ages down to the present time. Has not money played an important rôle in the lives and plans of God's ministers?

May we not ascribe such monologues as that of the rich man in the Gospel to some clerics? "And I will say to my soul: Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thy rest; eat, drink, make good cheer."

Have you never known clerical misers, shylocks, and hoarders? Their one object in life is to save, gather in, lay aside for the future. They plan, calculate and devise means of getting more and ever more of this earth's goods.

A reasonable, moderate provision for the future is, allowable, nay praiseworthy. But clerical curmudgeons, whose thoughts are gold, and still more gold, are a sorry lot at best, for whom there is little place in the Church of Christ.

2. "But God said to him: Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee."

This has happened, not once, but many times. A stroke, heart failure—and the rich man in priestly garments lies cold in death. What then shall become of his money which was so carefully gathered and hoarded?

"What you have gathered, whose shall it be?"

There is rejoicing among the relatives that their rich uncle has saved so much and departed at the proper time.

"So is he that layeth up treasures for himself, and is not rich towards God."

To be sure, let us repeat, the priest must know how to save and provide for the future, but, "*est modus in rebus.*"

## 122. *Worldly and Other-Worldly Ideals—The Priest and Modern Commercialism*

"Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matt. vi, 33; Luke xii, 31).

1. These words of Our Lord are in direct opposition to the prevailing ideas regarding property, its acquisition, value and place in modern life. Our Lord points His words with the singular reference to the birds of the air and the lilies of the field. These ideas can scarcely be dovetailed with those of our own time, which places such emphasis on the acquisition of personal wealth, which makes national wealth and greatness synomynous, and which, finally, considers international commerce not only a necessity, but an ideal.

It is a fact, too, that the clergy are emphasizing more and more the need for an intensive participation on the part of Catholics in this economic and industrial life. They too must become "successful," so that Catholics, as a body, will not suffer in the competitive struggle, but maintain an equal position with their fellow-citizens.

Does not this emphasis on participation in the in-

dustrial and commercial struggle stand in opposition to the words of our Lord, which must, after all, remain the norm of a truly Christian life? It is very necessary that the priest and pastor of souls study the matter carefully, so that he can guide his flock aright.

2. It is evident, of course, that Our Lord does not make light of the duty of providing by earnest, strenuous labor for the future. Let us recall that He praised the servant who had invested his talents well and berated the other who had foolishly buried his. He advises him who would build to calculate carefully the expense, and him who would lead a nation into war, to provide suitably for the fray. This surely makes it plain that Our Lord does not condemn a *reasonable* industrialism. But He does emphasize moderation in the evaluation of these things. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God."

3. On the other hand, it is equally clear that Our Lord is not laying down a rule of perfection for the few. Rather, He is setting up a norm in contrast to that of the heathen world, a norm, universal in its application and binding in its sanction. It simply comes to this: We have laid before us two distinct world views—the Christian, which, while it recognizes the need, based on divine command, to labor and provide for this life, yet emphasizes the supreme importance of the life to come; and the pagan, which, concerning itself little, if at all, with the hereafter, stakes its all on the fleeting present, its pleasures and its joys.

Is it any wonder, then, that two classes of people, each espousing one of these views, should present a



very unevenly matched race? Those whose every effort is put forward to live solely for this world, must obviously outstrip those who, though living in the world, are not really of it. Indeed, "the children of this world are wiser than the children of light." And this will always remain so.

4. Hence it is not only dangerous but wrong to attempt to infuse this world-view into Catholics, to make of them "children of this world," instead of "children of light," to demand that they participate in modern industrial warfare solely for the sake of the perishable things of the earth.

Modern industrial life is wholly pagan. The Catholic who gives himself over entirely to its ways and methods, must necessarily close his eyes to the Christian world-view, which his holy religion places before him.

We are living under the divine command to labor in the sweat of our brows. As society is at present constituted, this means participation in the industrialism of our day. It can never mean, however, that we should identify our ideas and ideals with those prevailing in the world about us.

The fundamental difficulty lies in the unjust social and economic system under which we are striving to maintain ourselves. A more equitable distribution of the natural wealth which God has placed at the disposal of all His children, would lessen the fierce intensity of the struggle for existence. Life could be lived in a decent, reasonable, rational manner, and the instinct for pleasures and treasures more lasting

than those of earth would lead to the prevalence of a Christian world-view.

It is this that is important for each pastor of souls to realize, and with a whole-hearted appreciation of this feature of our industrial life, effort will be spent to replace our present social structure by something better.

5. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God."

There is here a direct application also to the work of the priest and pastor. His must ever be a specifically spiritual, pastoral labor. Though he is not to confine himself solely to this, the order of importance must not be changed. Here and there God has placed individuals in charge of work which is primarily educational, social or literary. But the pastor of souls has a first duty which is perfectly clear and obvious. He cannot engage in political, social or literary labors that would leave him little time to fulfill his duties to his flock,—in the confessional, in the pulpit, at the bedside.

It must ever be: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God."

### 123. *Girdle and Lamp—Purity and Faith*

1. "Let your loins be girt, and lamps burning in your hands." (Luke xii, 35).

"*Praecinge me cingulo puritatis*," the Church puts in the mouth of the priest daily before the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice. A loose, sloppy garment may signify a dissolute mode of life; it makes work difficult,

hinders activity, and prevents a manly forward stride.

Could there be a greater and more galling hindrance to a priest of God than low and unprincipled desires, and depressing qualms of conscience?

The lower appetites are like fermenting wine, which must be forcibly restrained from doing damage.

2. "Let your lamps burn." Complete mastery over the natural appetites and an illuminating spirit of faith are the two most important characteristics of a godly priest.

Unhappy the priest whose path is not illumined by the rays of a brightly burning faith. He cannot safely lead others, for his own sight is dimmed and failing.

3. "Take heed, therefore," admonishes Our Lord, "that the light which is in thee be not darkness."

This supernatural light is the light of faith. Alas if it burns dimly, or is entirely extinguished! "If the light within you is extinguished, how great is the darkness!" An enveloping pall settles over the soul, like a night without stars, a depressing day without sunshine and warmth. All the joy, inspiration, and efficacy departs from the life of the priest.

Guard this light of faith, this supernatural sight, that it be not dimmed nor fail entirely.

#### 124. *The Alert Servants—The Aging Priest*

"Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching." (Luke xii, 37).

1. The hour of His coming is not known; it may occur at any time, day or night.

We must be eternally vigilant; we must keep to our post until called. For, according to the words of the parable: Blessed are those servants whom the Lord finds prepared even at the second and third night-watches. These watches indicate, without doubt, the various periods of life.

2. Not a few priests earnestly desire to live to a ripe old age. And yet, is this a desirable grace for all? By no means! Had the Lord come to some during the first night-watch, He would have found them with loins girded and the lamp of faith burning, persevering in the watch. But the postponement of His coming has brought sleep and weariness to His servants. "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

And thus it may come to pass that at the third night watch the priest has fallen into a deep sleep; zeal, the spirit of prayer, and a hardened conscience have all tumbled into a heap. A slothful sensuality has conquered the higher powers and brought them to dust.

To be sure, there are priests who, even in their advanced years, are models of piety, virtue, zeal, and the Christlike spirit. But how frequently it is otherwise! What remains over is a fitful, disgruntled, disappointed withered bit of humanity, a burden to himself and others, a tottering ruin in body and soul. No, indeed, old age is not always a blessing.

However it be, pray to God that he may find you prepared, awake and alert.

125. *The Wise and Faithful Steward*  
(Luke xii, 45 sqq.)

The parable of the wise and faithful steward gave rise to the answer to Peter's question (Luke xii, 41): "Lord, dost thou speak this parable to us or likewise to all?" *i. e.*, is it applicable to all the faithful, or principally to the spiritual leaders? The latter is unquestionably the case. The parable sets forth the pastor's position, his duties and his characteristics in the parish.

1. *His position in the parish.*—He is not the Lord, but, rather, "the Lord has placed him over His servants."

He is the representative, the "servant," not the owner, the landlord, the ruler. He should, therefore, not assume rights which are not his.

A despotic overlordship has never yet made friends, whereas it has brought down the bitterest attacks upon priests and clerics.

2. *His duties and tasks.*—"Him the Lord has placed over his servants, that he may, at the proper time, give them their due allowance."

Is this the case with you, dear pastor? Do you give the children the nourishment their years demand? Are you convinced that nothing but the best is good enough for them?

Do you give the sick their spiritual medicine at the proper time, the poor and the weak the assistance they have a right to demand?

Neglected children, starved sheep, are a sure indication that a good mother in the one case, and a good

shepherd in the other, are lacking. So, too, is it quite possible from the state of a parish to draw a correct conclusion regarding the character of its pastor.

3. *Characteristics*.—Be “a faithful and wise steward,” faithful in your administration, in the fulfillment of your duties, wise in your zeal, speech, and conduct.

4. *Faults*.—Wo to the master who says to himself: “My Lord is long a-coming, I can do for myself,” and begins by “striking the men-servants and maid-servants and by eating and drinking and being drunk.”

Is this possible? Indeed. Many a tragic life covers the pages of history in the ages past. Nor need we go back beyond our own time. Even to-day there are districts and countries where priests are representatives of Christ in name only!

5. *Punishment*.—“The Lord of that servant will come in the day that he hopeth not,” and he will cast him out into exterior darkness where there is howling and gnashing of teeth.

Woe to the priest who, forgetting his responsibility, and setting up standards of his own, neglects and abuses his flock and, instead of converting sinners, makes common cause with them.

## 126. *Great Graces, Great Responsibilities—The Divine Economy*

“And unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required: and to whom they have com-

mitted much, of him they will demand the more." (Luke xii, 48).

1. We have here the proclamation of a rule of divine economy which directly affects the life of every priest.

To whom, pray, is more given than to the priest of God? He receives such an over-abundance of graces, privileges, and honors, that no other earthly calling or station can compare with his.

Has not God set him over His house, given him the key to His treasury of graces, the care of His sheep, the protection of immortal souls, and endowed him with the highest and holiest privileges and rights that place him far above other men?

Is it not to be expected, therefore, that the Lord will demand and expect more from him than from others, from the "servants and maids,"—more faith, reverence, love, zeal, virtues and holiness?

2. All this was not unknown to you as you took over the duties of your sacred calling. It was clear to you as you knelt, a young levite, before the Bishop. It came to you with that holy fear that filled your breast on the memorable day of your ordination.

Nor does it alleviate matters to proffer the excuse of a dulled appreciation, following a daily and intimate relationship. Unfortunately God does not judge by this norm.

### 127. *The Fire of Truth—No Compromises with Error*

"I am come to cast fire on the earth; and what



will I, but that it be kindled?" (Luke xii, 49; cfr. Matt. x, 34).

1. Though fire illumines and warms, it is also a purifying, consuming agent. The fire which Christ brought, is the divine truth, the one memorable, eternal verity which knows no compromise with untruth and error.

This fire, which Christ brought upon the earth, has illumined and cheered the hearts of millions; it has also devoured, consumed inexorably. It laid the temple of paganism in ashes, illumined the darkness of many lands, and enkindled a spiritual conflagration.

2. As the torch-bearer of this truth, the priest, if he holds it aloft undaunted, is bound to meet with opposition and resentment.

Take the example, sufficiently common, of a neglected parish, in which the spirit of religious zeal and observance have burned low. An energetic, zealous priest enters upon his duties. He has naught but the consuming, devouring fire of divine truth for his weapon. He applies it unflinchingly, and lo! the conflagration spreads from individuals to families, to the entire parish! And this he was sent to do!

3. Hence it is necessary that he take care lest he unite with the divine fire those destructive fires of his own inordinate zeal which devour without purging and purifying. Else he may discredit truth itself.

#### 128. *True and False Peace—Unavoidable Dissonances*

"Think ye, that I am come to give peace on earth?

I tell you, no; but separation." (Luke xii, 51; cfr. Matt. x, 34 sq.)

1. This is a striking admonition directed to those priests who believe their principal task lies in pleasing all, in smoothing out all difficulties and harmonizing all discordant elements. Such are apostles of a pottering peace, of a cowardly compromise. They have forgotten the above-quoted words of the Saviour.

To be sure, His wish was to bring peace to those of good will, who would take His yoke upon their shoulders; but not the peace of which the world dreams; rather *His* "peace, which the world does not know."

This is not in contradiction to the words of our Lord in this instance. True peace cannot be bought at the price of truth, or of God's law.

2. Hence it is that the propagation of the New Law, from the very beginning, brought separation, separating the cockle from the wheat, the goats from the sheep.

Some favor His doctrine, others oppose it. Thus arise opposition, divisions, parties, which extend into the most intimate relationships, and as our Lord predicts, there are households in which the father is opposed to the son, the daughter to the mother, etc. Thus it is that a "man's enemies shall be they of his own household."

We know this very thing to have occurred in the early Church, in the days of the martyrs, when families were torn asunder.

Then there are mixed marriages! How frequently

the words of our Lord are fulfilled in such cases. The curse of religious difference brings strife and division into the family circle, which leaves wounds that can never be healed.

That is undoubtedly painful, and even the priest is deeply moved. But there is no remedy. Neither Church nor priest can change a jot or tittle of God's law.

3. All that can be done to alleviate the painful situation, can and will be done by the Church and her priests; but there can be no, not even the slightest, alteration of essentials.

"*Non possumus*" were the words of the Pope; they must likewise be the words of every priest, no matter what the pain, no matter how stinging the charge of "intolerance." "I am not come to bring peace on earth, but separation."

129. *The Barren Fig-Tree—Inscription on the  
Tomb of a Priest  
(Luke xiii, 6 sqq.)*

1. How tragically this parable was fulfilled in Israel! All efforts of our Lord were fruitless; hence the terrible words: "Cut it down therefore: why cumbereth it the ground?"

Were not the people of Israel, against whom this judgment was uttered, God's chosen people? And does not the priest, as a member of the clergy, belong to the "chosen people"?

2. "Cut it down." You recall, among your friends and acquaintances, some in whom these terrible words were fulfilled.

This fate need not, in fact does not, overtake the unfortunate one immediately and noticeably. The interior transformation often takes place even while the beautiful and pleasing exterior remains as before.

3. Does not this recall Judas? Did not our Lord plant this tree himself, and tend it affectionately, and for three long years await its fruitage in vain? On the tomb-stone of this unfortunate one are inscribed the saddest words that can be written of any man: "It were better for him had he never been born."

### 130. *The Infirm Woman—Depressed Souls*

"And behold there was a woman, who had a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years: and she was bowed together, neither could she look upwards at all. Whom when Jesus saw, he called her unto him, and said to her: Woman, thou art delivered from thy infirmity. And he laid his hands upon her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God." (Luke xiii, 11-13).

1. In every parish there are downcast, dejected persons, who go about in a state of perpetual discouragement, for whom the beauty and joy of life do not exist, for whom the last rays of hope have long since been extinguished. What is it that depresses them?

Is it a bitter care, a sad recollection, a bad conscience, a secret sin?

Whatever it is, poor soul, go to a good confessor. There, in the quiet of the confessional, give him your confidence, lay before him the burdens of your heart, and he will heal you, raise you up, and send you home rejoicing, as our Lord did with the "daughter of Abraham." You will be born anew and rejoice in the day and hour that lead you to the priest.

2. How kindly and considerately our Lord dealt with this woman! Every word and action of His is as a rubric for the confessional.

There are five distinct phases in the action of Christ in this instance. He discovers her full of misery and woe; He bids her come to Him; He imposes His hand on her; He heals her with His divine power, and He raises her up.

Here are five excellent rules for the guidance of the confessor in dealing with broken souls.

### 131. *The Ruler of the Synagogue—Clerical Bureaucracy*

"And the ruler of the synagogue (being angry that Jesus had healed on the sabbath) answering, said to the multitude: Six days there are wherein you ought to work. In them therefore come, and be healed; and not on the sabbath day." (Luke xiii, 14 sqq.)

1. Here is a perfect example of a type which has, unfortunately, continued down to our own day—the stickler, the formalist, the martinet.

They are over zealous for the "law," the "rule," the "regulations," and they confound their own cramped

interpretations of God's laws with the laws themselves. The Sabbath is the "day of the Lord," that day on which God is to be honored and revered in a special manner. Now in what better way could this be done than by performing a deed or an act which manifests the greatness and goodness of God, —in short, by means of a miracle? And yet this Lilliputian mind conceived wonder-working as a violation of the Sabbath. "On work-days come and be healed, but not on the Sabbath."

God has no office-hours, like an official, and neither should a priest have them. The salvation of souls knows not time as a barrier.

2. *Sabbath and Sunday*.—The people come from far and near to the Synagogue on the Sabbath day and hence into the sphere of our Lord's miraculous activities. Thus it is that on this day so many of His cures were effected. In our times, Sunday is a day of great spiritual activity. Then it is that the miracles of the confessional, Eucharistic communion, and the spoken word, in greater measure, take place. No Sunday should pass without some spiritually blind or crippled soul being healed through your ministrations.

132. *The Mustard Seed and the Leaven*  
 Luke xiii, 18 sqq.; cfr. Mark iv, 30 sqq.;  
 Matt. xiii, 31 sqq.)

There is, among other lessons to be gleaned from these two parables, the fundamental one that we should

perform good works quietly without ostentation and display.

1. Christianity is not likened to a shrill siren-call or a thunderous advertisement, but to a mustard-seed and a leaven—the most unostentatious and secretive elements of activity.

For the priest there is an especial lesson in this parable, regarding constant perseverance of effort in spite of seeming failure. The great works of God, His Church, the religious Orders, etc., had humble, unobtrusive beginnings.

The plodding missionary in distant lands may not witness the full fruitage of his exacting labors, and at times he would despair. Yet the seed decays and germinates; there is a great activity, though unseen and unnoticed. Courage! Others will behold the tree which is growing from the seed of your labors and sacrifices.

2. Oh! this feverish activity, this intense striving for visible, palpable results—how far it is removed from the spirit of Christ! He likens himself to the little grain of wheat, which must be buried in the earth, decay and decompose, before it can arise to life and fruitage. And, verily, this divine seed did bury itself for thirty long years. Perhaps you, too, must pass through a period of hidden germination before your harvest time arrives.

3. Forces for good are quiet and unobtrusive in their activities like a leaven in the mass of dough. But their work will be surely accomplished, like that good leaven.



The quiet, zealous work of a priest in a parish is truly like the activity of a leaven. Slowly the change is accomplished, in individuals, in families, in the entire congregation. A new composition is the result!

### 133. *Deadly Hatred of Christ*

1. The long pent-up hatred of the Jews for Christ breaks in all its fury in the incident in Solomon's porch in the temple. (John x, 22 sqq.)

"How long dost thou hold our souls in suspense?"

It is plain from this question that He is a thorn in their sides, and no longer gives them rest. He must be put out of the way, annihilated if need be. That is the burden of their schemes and machinations by day and by night.

The Master answers them calmly and clearly. But they hear Him not. They desire not to hear the truth, but to seal the mouth that speaks it.

They were powerless to meet His answers. They resorted to violence. "They took up stones to stone him."

2. This hatred against Christ has been inherited by His Church and His clergy. To destroy, uproot, annihilate them, is the secret resolve of the enemy.

The scene in the porch of Solomon has been repeated again and again throughout the Christian era. *Écrasez l'infame! à bas la calotte!* is the cry of France; "To Tyburn and the gallows with the Papists!" it resounds in England; "Down with the Romanists!" is the angry proclamation in other lands.

3. This fierce hatred, which lies smoldering in the hearts of millions, may at any time break into a berserker rage; then the passion of Christ may be repeated in His members.

To be a priest of Christ, an *alter Christus*, means to share with Him a love which He alone can awaken and a hatred which He alone can arouse.

### 134. *Shepherd and Sheep—Object and Task of the Priesthood*

(John x, 27, sqq.)

Here our Lord again returns to His favorite parable.

1. "My sheep hear my voice." Why? His voice is so friendly, loving, trusting, and calls with such a tender appeal.

If your flock does not heed your words, or heeds them unwillingly, what is the reason? Is there a harsh forbidding note in your voice that scares people away? Could you be enticed by a voice so raucous and stern?

2. "I know them."

Not only their outward appearance, their color and size, but their character, their good and evil tendencies, their feelings and needs.

How little many a pastor knows of his sheep! "I know them not and they do not know me," might be said of many. And yet close acquaintanceship is an absolute requisite of confidence and fruitful activity.

This constitutes a real pastoral problem in our big

cities, where the floating population is so large an element of every parish. The most careful and painstaking vigilance is necessary to keep in touch with the children of the faith.

3. "I give them eternal life."

The ideal of a priest's life!

Eternal, supernatural life flourishes only with supernatural nourishment, the eternal verities, heavenly bread and divine remedies.

These are all in the power of the priest to give and dispense: the divine Truth ("That is the eternal life, which they know . . ."), the divine nourishment ("Who eats my Flesh . . . will have eternal life"), the power of the keys, which provides against eternal death ("Whom you forgive . . .").

4. "They will not be lost for all eternity, and none will snatch them from me."

Recall these words as you stand before your flock, encompassing them all with a watchful eye.

Here are the innocent children, so precious in the sight of God; there the young men and young women, your greatest present care; here the men and women, your hope and desire; there the aged, your consolation and joy—and all, every one of them reaching out for life eternal, but not yet obtaining it. You are to coach them, to bring them within running distance of the prize.

Not one shall be lost, not one! Your every thought and effort, yea! your whole life shall be dedicated to their salvation. Not one, not the least shall be lost for lack of your assistance.

5. "And no one shall snatch them from you."

But a thousand pitfalls lie in their path, a thousand snares are set for their capture. On all sides they are beset by those who go about seeking whom they may devour. You hear them on all sides, from the public press, from education, amusement, and social intercourse. May none of these snatch your sheep from you?

6. There is but one hope: "My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one can snatch them from His hand."

He will assist me, keep me, guide me. He will bless all my efforts, made with a good intention and according to the abilities He has given me.

### 135. *Stoning—The Motive of Hatred Against the Priesthood*

"For which of those works do you stone me?"  
(John x, 32 sq.)

1. Happy the priest or religious, who at a time of calumny and persecution can stand before his accusing enemies in the full consciousness of having done nought which would give the slightest justification for their charges, indeed, of having done nought but good to his accusers themselves.

There is no more bitter chalice than that of ungratefulness. Unjust accusations, arising from misunderstandings, unfair and unfounded suspicions, deliberate falsifications and diabolical calumnies are more painful, by far, than physical wounds. They are the stoning of the soul.

There is little likelihood that our persecutions will be at all like that to which Christ was subjected; and yet Ludolf remarks that there are three kinds of stonings:

*lapidare corde, i.e., malis cogitationibus;*

*lapidare ore, i.e., blasphemias;*

*lapidare manu, i.e., violentia.*

To such stonings all of us may be and are subjected almost daily.

2. "We stone you, because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God."

Here then is the motive of their hatred. And if we were to examine the implacable enmity of our own time against the Catholic priesthood, we would discover a like motive. They hate the priesthood because it represents to them a standard and an ideal of life—"thou makest thyself God"—which is diametrically opposed to their own degraded worldliness.

One need not search far in the records of our own day to come upon this motive.

The fact that the Catholic priesthood persists, in spite of these persecutions, calumnies, slanders, and insidious attacks of the *Zeitgeist* and its cohorts, in preaching Christ crucified, and that millions follow this ideal, is the first and foremost cause of the berserker rage of the enemy. They are unable to cope with this miraculous perpetuity of the Christian religion; hence they would stone its standard bearers, shouting the while: *Écrasez l'infame!*

136. *The Proof of Divine Mission—The Evidence of a Holy Priesthood*

“If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not; but if I do, though you will not believe me, believe the works.” (John x, 37 sq.)

1. The “works of the Father” are His miracles. It is with these that we are here concerned. And in the “works of the Father” must be included the life and labors of Our Lord. Hence it is that these words have a peculiar reference to the life of every zealous, worthy priest.

Neither fine words nor gorgeous rhetoric, neither the habit nor the purple, neither ecclesiastical honors nor intellectual attainments constitute the essential characteristics of the truly Christ-like priest. These rather consist in his virtue and spirituality, which, as “works of the Father,” manifest the divine power and goodness. The miracle of a holy, self-effacing, self-sacrificing, priestly life and conduct is, for all the world, the most striking argument and the most efficacious recommendation of these ideas and ideals which the priest represents.

2. It is obvious then that the enemy is employing his most dangerous weapon when he attempts to show a divergence between the principles and practices, between the words and works of the Catholic clergy, and to drag the priesthood into the mire of disgusting, revolting calumnies.

137. *The Number of the Elect—Rigorism in the Pulpit*

“Lord, are they few that are saved?” (Luke xiii, 23 sqq.)

1. Here is a question which only too frequently, perhaps, forces itself upon the unwilling attention of the pastor of souls and the missionary. It may at times even depress, weigh down, discourage him. What is it that our Lord answers to this difficult question?

He makes no positive reply. He merely remarks that many attempt the narrow way, but fail; that many knock without receiving an answer; that many of those who are “sons of the realm,” are debarred.

2. The number of the elect is a mystery and as such should be spoken of very cautiously, if at all, from the pulpit. At any rate, the spirit and manner in which this subject is often dealt with, particularly by Jansenistically inclined writers and orators, are in disagreement with Christ and His Church. In some instances there has been wilful misinterpretation of the Word of God.

“We have no revelation concerning the number of the saved and damned. Hence there is no justification for a reign of terror, which, while calculated to work upon the imagination of the people so that they would curb their sinful inclinations, arouses in them a terrifying anxiety concerning their eternal salvation. This, surely, is not the spirit of Him at whose birth the angels sang: ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will.’ ”



3. What is the effect of this rigorism in the pulpit? Does it bring blessings? In the course of a mission it may be justifiable to emphasize the idea expressed in the words: "Work out your salvation in fear and trembling." But "the ordinary Sunday sermon for our people should rouse the heart and refresh the mind; in a word, it should encourage and build up—that is to say, it should be pleasant, *ut veritas placeat*, as St. Augustine has it. To threaten with fire and brimstone, to use thunder and lightning, is to destroy. Our mission is to edify with the soothing doctrine of the merciful Master, whose words ever breathe hope and forgiveness for the greatest sinner and of whom Isais said: 'He shall not contend, nor cry out, neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets. The bruised reed He shall not break and smoking flax He shall not extinguish, till He send forth judgment and victory. And in His name the Gentiles shall hope.' " (Bishop Stang)

4. The visitations of God (the flood, Sodom, destruction of the Canaanite and Bethsamite races, etc.) to which Massillon, among others, refers, are temporal punishments and as such cannot be used to prove a mass destruction. The so-called "classical passages" in the Gospels, which indicate the small number of the elect, refer, as an examination of the context reveals (cf., *e. g.*, Matt. xix, 30; xx, 16 with Luke xiii, 30) not to mankind in general, but to the chosen people and their entrance into the kingdom of Christ. The oft-repeated quotation: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence" has an entirely

different meaning; the expression: "Who hates not father and mother" is a Hebraism which takes the place of our "loves more." The parables of the winnowing fan (Luke iii, 17), of the wheat and the cockle (Matt. xiii, 30, 41), of the sheep and the goats (Matt. xxv, 33) rather emphasize the opposite view. For the cockle is but a small portion of the wheat and the goats are few in number compared with the sheep. Concerning the rich man's chance of salvation, apparently hopeless, our Lord remarks: "With God all things are possible" (Mark x, 23 sqq.). Thus many of these rigoristic presentations, when carefully examined, collapse, nor are they supported in any measure by the textual and exegetical explanations of the Fathers and early theologians and orators. One of the few texts, which deal directly with the number of the elect is Apoc. vii, 4-10:

"After this I saw a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues. . . ."

How different from Massillon, who, to support his thesis, seems unable to distinguish between a state of freedom from mortal sin and baptismal innocence, between the austerity of the Saints and the proper disposition for the reception of the Sacraments, between the commandments and the counsels of perfection, and, finally, between sin and mere human weakness.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the article of Msgr. W. Stang: "That Sermon of Father James on Fire and Brimstone" in the *American Eccl. Review*, XX, 568-587, where this question is dealt with particularly from the pastoral point of view.

138. *The Salvation of the Heathen—The Missionary Spirit among the Clergy*

“And there shall come from the east and the west, and the north and the south; and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.” (Lk. xiii, 29; cf. Matt. viii, 11).

1. There is reference here to the pagans. How frequently and with what compassion does not Our Lord refer to these sheep outside His fold, into which He desires them to come!

Their fate should lie close to our hearts, for we are, all of us, descendants of converted heathen races. How affectionately does not our Lord cherish them in His Sacred Heart! To them He sent his Apostles, to them, even to-day, He sends his very best messengers. They are to call the races and peoples from the east and the west and lead them to that place prepared for them in the Kingdom of God. The scene in the Roman Empire, Brittany, Germany, and Scandinavia, in the time of SS. Boniface, Augustine, and Ansgar, is being repeated at this very moment in far off mission countries, on our own Indian reservations and in the Negro settlements of the South.

2. And who is it that should show the liveliest, most intelligent, most self-sacrificing interest in this grand and glorious work? Is it not a fact that there are laymen who make greater sacrifices for the missions than the pastor or his assistants, and whose knowledge of and interest in the missions are truly edifying?

A great Catholic layman in Europe some years ago

sadly remarked: "Were I to ask myself, how often during the year have I heard mention made of the propagation of the faith among the heathen, I should be forced to answer: Never! Our Lord's life is presented to us in all its phases, but of Jesus, the light of the heathen world, we hear nothing."

3. "Yes, but we have our home missions to care for," comes back the reply, "and they are nearer and just as needy." Suppose the Church in Europe had spoken in this manner a century or two ago, with reference to the then foreign missions of America! What would have become of America? Does not our Lord say: "I have other sheep, and they too must be led into my fold?"

139. *The Last Shall Be First and the First Last—  
Surprises at the Last Judgment*  
(Luke xiii, 30)

1. How strangely these words were fulfilled by the convocation of the races in the Church of Christ! Among the last and the least stood the heathen, upon whom the Israelites looked with disdain, in fact with complete disregard. They never attempted to carry their religion to these despised people, whom they regarded as haughtily as the Pharisee the publican. And yet these same heathen were afterward accepted into the fold of Christ.

"The first shall be last and the last first."

The poor robber and the pagan merchant pluck the first fruits from the Tree of Life on Golgotha, and

not Gamaliel, but the former tax collector Levi, becomes the first evangelist.

2. What surprises there will be at the Last Judgment when all titles, honors, privileges, and honorariums, all appearances and deceptions are torn away and God determines the true order of worth!

How strangely positions will then be exchanged, order of precedence reversed, short-sighted human judgments exploded. Pride and hypocrisy, vacuous self-justification and promotion will vanish before true worth and value. "The first shall be the last!"

What surprises for even the pastor of souls who thought he knew his flock! Where are those he classed as his "pious" ones, his "models," his "shining examples"? Right there in the first rank stand some of his outcasts, his troublesome, wayward sheep, who in life were his greatest source of anxiety.

And you, what of yourself? You are now the pastor, the shepherd, the leader, holding a position high in the esteem of men, surrounded with a halo of superiority, endowed with the glamor of God's elect. But what of your position then? Alas! it is only too true that "the first will be the last."

The *gratiae gratis datae* are one thing, and an important thing, in this life, but in the next, only the *gratiae acquisitae* count.

#### 140. *Pharisaical Intimidation—Persecution of the Church*

"The same day, there came some of the Pharisees,

saying to him: Depart, and get thee hence, for Herod hath a mind to kill thee." (Luke xiii, 31 sqq.)

1. How continuously these words are re-echoed from century to century, down through the ages!

It is natural, that the Ambassador of Christ, the 'Apostle of Truth, the Preacher of the Cross, should be accorded no welcome by the world. They are too disturbing to the pernicious peace of pleasure which the world loves.

"Get thee hence!" this is the cry of the Rome of Nero, with all its pride and vices, "get thee hence" is the cry hurled at St. Boniface, at the missionaries to Japan, China, India.

"Get thee hence!" is the cry hurled at the Jesuits now here now there; it was the cry during the Kulturkampf, when bishops, priests, and religious were banished from home and church. It was a war of extermination against the Catholic Church and her priesthood.

"Get thee hence!" may be the unexpressed wish of many in your own parish, as soon as you probe into dark places, arouse comatose consciences, and speak the truth fearlessly and openly. "The servant is not greater than his Master. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." (John xv 20).

#### 141. *Christ's Reply to Herod—Politics in the Pulpit*

1. "Go and tell that fox." . . . (Luke xiii, 32). Herod apparently had sent a threat to our Lord, through the Pharisees, that He should abandon

Galilee. The deputized Roman tyrant feared public disorder and the authorities at Rome.

Our Lord reassures him. His activities are not political in their nature; moreover, they would not last much longer. More than this, the prophets had been put to death in Jerusalem, not Galilee.

The incident is noteworthy, for it is the first time that Our Lord became involved in a political affair and publicly expressed Himself regarding the country's head, on questions of personality and purely political problems.

And yet, such problems seemed to lie at every hand. Near by the Temple were the castle of Antonia, the Palace of Pilate, and the Roman headquarters. Every look in that direction recalled painful memories of a dimmed splendor, of lost political freedom. Our Lord does not touch these wounds. Moreover, He strenuously opposes to the prevailing political idea of the Messiah that of a spiritual, theocratic, supra-nationalistic Redeemer. He speaks of freedom, but it is a freedom which has little to do with political liberty. He spiritedly opposes the idea of founding a political empire and making Him king.

When the report is carried to Him of the bloody massacre which Pilate perpetrated in the Temple, Our Lord says not a word against the Romans. He but uses the incident to illustrate His own teaching. (Luke xiii, 1 sqq.).

2. The exclusion of political subjects from the instructions of the Master must be the rule for Catholic pulpits. Purely political sermons, which at no



point touched religion, would be decidedly harmful.

However there can be no question but that the pastor, as the leader of his people, can and should make use of the pulpit on occasion to awaken, direct, and guide them in taking the proper attitude toward the many pressing social problems with which they are confronted. There is little difficulty in this if there is a will to do the right thing. There need not be, as is perfectly obvious, any participation in partisan politics. The principles underlying the social and economic problems are far above the plane of petty politics. Directions may be given in these without in the least touching upon partisan issues.

142. *The Hen and her Brood—Pastoral Solicitude*  
(Luke xiii, 34)

This is a beautiful representation of true zeal for souls.

1. How solicitous the hen is for her little chicks! Day and night she spends herself in their care, and that they may not stray too far away, that she may constantly know their whereabouts, that they may easily find her and fly to her for protection, she repeatedly raises her shrill cry of warning.

And as the night approaches, she collects her brood and protectingly prepares them for the darkness. An approaching storm finds no more solicitous mother than her. With what uncalculating and unmeasured energy she sets herself against a destructive enemy; rather her life, than that of the least of her charges!

However stupid and foolish a hen may otherwise be, yet her mother-love is beautiful and touching. There is no thought of self; her whole life is devoted to her little ones; she shows them where they can find sustenance, and scratches for them in the hard ground until she bleeds. When she has found something, she calls them to her and shares with them, indeed, suffers hunger herself rather than deprive them of food. Here is a picture of ideal mother-love.

2. This is the simile which our Lord used to describe His love for us. Should not this beautiful parable likewise have an application to His disciples and priests?

Is it applicable to your own case, to your work as pastor of souls? Do you resemble the solicitous hen with her brood, or are you perhaps more like the proud egotistical cock who thinks of naught but his own overlordship?

143. *The Invitation to Dine—The Spirit of St. Vincent in the Rectory*

“When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, nor thy kinsmen, nor thy neighbors who are rich; lest perhaps they also invite thee again, and a recompense be made to thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame and the blind; and thou shalt be blessed, because they have not wherewith to make thee recompense: for recompense shall be made thee at the resurrection of the just.” (Luke xiv, 12-14).

1. The Orient observes customs quite different from ours, particularly in regard to the feasts and dinners of friendship. Convention has not drawn its separating lines through society as in the Western world: there is less discriminating distinction in the invitations and hence less distinguishing divisions between those that sit down to dinner.

These differences must be well considered if we are to understand correctly the Gospel narrative.

2. As festive gatherings played their part in the public life of Our Lord, so it is a common and commendable practice for the clergy to gather around the table of friendship on occasion and enter into a spirit of whole-hearted camaraderie. But the spirit of rivalry must not be allowed to exceed all reasonableness and a befitting budget besides. The eyes of the poor are sharp. They readily discover injustice—having been accustomed to it all their lives—and particularly any injustice of the clergy against themselves. Allusions to magnificent clerical banquets sometimes go the rounds of the anti-Catholic sheets, and it must be admitted that occasionally there is more than a grain of truth in their slanderous imputations.

Moreover the cult of relationship, nepotism, kinship, etc., should have no altar in the rectory. Kinsfolk should be treated on an equality with others.

3. "Invite the poor." This counsel is practically impossible of literal fulfillment in our day and country. The circumstances in which we live, particularly in the cities, do not permit it. And yet, if not the letter, at least the spirit of our Lord's wish should

be respected. A priest can and should lead the way to the care and protection of the poor and the outcasts, particularly those in his own parish. The spirit of St. Vincent de Paul must radiate from the rectory throughout the entire congregation.

144. *The Parable of the Invited Guests—Church Visits and Church Neglect*  
(Luke xiv, 15-25).

1. The servants who send out the invitations to supper are God's priests. It is their appointed task to gather in the guests.

It is the people, particularly the sons and daughters of the "well to do," "modern," "liberal" Catholics, who as a rule most rapidly assume a negligent, careless attitude towards their holy religion. The poor, the outcast, and the unfortunate, on the other hand, are less likely to make themselves guilty of slovenly conduct in religious matters.

The places at the festive board were not all taken; whereupon the command went forth: "Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled."

Who are these people in the highways and byways of life? Our cities are filled with them; they are the immigrants, the foreigners, the "floating population," and those of strange tongues and manners, who are so often persecuted here. They cannot be reached by an ordinary invitation, they must be sought out and pressure brought to bear on them. Every

highway and byway, even the most uninviting, must be scoured.

2. This parable furnishes us with an occasion to consider more in detail church attendance and neglect.

It is a comparatively simple thing to berate those who are negligent in the fulfillment of their duties. However, it may be in order occasionally to examine the condition of affairs on the side of the Church leaders.

Has the host always prepared a fitting and well-appointed banquet, or are stale, rehashed victuals served to the hungry guests? Is the manner of the host always calculated to invite, make comfortable, and really please his strange and uncouth guests?

Perhaps there is also something in the thought that what sufficed formerly is insufficient, or at least needs revision, at the present time.

The Church makes use of all the legitimate means at her disposal. Her ritual, rubrics and colorful services are designed to attract the hearts as well as the intellects of her children. Have not the changed conditions of our day lessened the efficacy of these means? When theatres, concerts, musicals, and the higher forms of artistic entertainment play so important a part in the life of even the humblest individual, they can have but one effect on the artistic phase of the Church's services. At any rate, the keen edge of the influence of this element in divine worship will be dulled.

Moreover, there can be little question but that the democratization of the educational agencies, the tire-

less press, the ubiquitous libraries, organizations and clubs, lectures and "movies" have whetted the intellectual appetite and made the demands of the faithful more exacting. Hence it is becoming more difficult to please and attract them.

3. The Church and her clergy must take these changed circumstances into consideration. The poorly prepared sermon is always out of place. But to-day it must not only not be poorly prepared, but it must avoid being colorless, drab, uninteresting, and unoriginal. The eternal truths must be presented in a new and interesting garb. Here, again, our Lord is the best guide. There is not a colorless word in any of His instructions. His figures of speech are striking and illuminating. It was a pleasure as well as instructive to listen to Him.,

"A great multitude followed Him."

#### 145. *Thought Before Action—Pastoral Prudence*

"This man began to build and was not able to finish." (Luke xiv, 30).

1. Our Lord here conveys an important lesson to us by means of two striking parables, namely, the forethought required in the construction of a tower and the waging of a war. He lays down this policy of action, not only for the Christian, but for the pastor of souls as well. How easily inexperience, false idealism, unregulated zeal can lead him into erroneous and false paths and into ventures which are untimely and doomed to failure.

*In ordine ideali*, in the world of thought, the most beautiful churches, the most efficient organizations, and the most thorough-going reforms are perfected over night. But in the world of fact, *in ordine reali*, it is entirely different. Money must be collected, a site bought, material ordered, and stone laid upon stone, before the idea takes form. This vast difference between the world of fact and fancy is not always thoroughly realized. The fruit lies in actualities, not in beautiful imaginings. Rather fewer, smaller, more fitting accomplishments than a vast forest of ruined idealistic plans.

Hence there is need for a consideration of conditions and an adjustment to circumstances.

2. The same holds true of warfare, concerning which a great strategist remarked, "Thought before action." A blind battle against strongly entrenched evils is certain of failure. In a polemical and controversial encounter measure the resources of the enemy as well as your own. How much harm has been done to individuals, organizations, and even to the Church through lack of regard for this common-sense principle.

Certainly, confidence and initiative are excellent, if tempered by proper self-evaluation and foresight.

146. *The Parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Drachma—Zeal for Souls*  
(Luke xv, 4 sqq.)

The Pharisees give forth a wail of discontent when they see that the Master shows solicitude for the poor,



despised publicans and sinners, treats them with consideration, and sits down to table with them.

Our Lord casts His answer to their objections into the form of two golden parables, which present in a striking and unmistakable manner His love for the sinner and a picture of the ideal shepherd of souls.

Two motives inspire zeal for souls. The first is presented in the parable of the lost sheep, the second in that of the lost drachma.

*A. The Lost Sheep—The Pursuit of the Shepherd*

“What man of you that hath a hundred sheep: and if he shall lose one of them, doth he not leave the ninety-nine in the desert, and go after that which was lost, until he find it?” (Luke xv, 4 sq.).

Even the least of the flock should be dear to the shepherd and the longest way should not be too long to bring it back to the fold!

It is so easy to say: “Why should I run after the headstrong and stiff-necked? He knows the way back; hence if he stubbornly absents himself from church, no one but himself is to be blamed. *Habeat sibi!*”

What would have become of us if the Good Shepherd had thought and acted thus! Where would you and I be now?

Many wanderers are shy and have grown wild and cannot easily be captured and brought back. They flee before the pursuing shepherd, even when they, at heart, long to return to the fold. Psychologically there is little difficulty in understanding this attitude.

Hence the searching shepherd must not come threateningly, as a policeman or an executioner. The sunshine of love and mercy must light his path, and his call must be encouraging. When he has found the lost sheep, he should not cuff and beat it, but take it upon his shoulders and carry it joyfully back to the fold.

*B. The Lost Drachma—Value of a Soul*

Why this long and exacting search for the drachma? Because the good woman realized its equivalent in hard labor. And for a person who possesses but ten, one is quite a portion.

So, too, each soul was redeemed at a costly price. And perhaps, in your own parish, in some forgotten corner, lies a drachma, a gold-piece, covered with dust and débris. A light and a broom might reveal these coins. Would you do less for a human soul?

*C. The Joy over the Converted Sinner*

Both parables close with the noteworthy sentence: "I say to you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance."

Does not this ring true? May we not compare Magdalen to nine and ninety of "just," or St. Matthew to ninety-nine law-abiding Israelites? Has it not been the experience of every zealous pastor, every hospital and jail chaplain, and every home and foreign missionary, that at times the words of our

Lord shone with an unusual confirmation in his soul? Indeed, even here in this vale of tears, there is ordinarily more joy over the conversion of one sinner than over ninety-nine just. Let us ask a Vincent Ferreri, a Leonard of Port Maurice, a Francis Hieronymo, and other great missionaries, both present and past, what were the most pleasant recollections of their missionary labors? Would it be the ten thousand of good Christians whom they strengthened and encouraged? Or would it be the miraculous conversions, the unusually large fish which they caught in their nets? Can there be a doubt of the answer, even within the range of your own experience?

147. *The Prodigal Son —The Priest as Father—  
as Prodigal Son*  
(Luke xv, 11 sqq.)

1. There is in this pearl of the parables of our Lord particularly valuable matter for priestly consideration. For it is plain that, in actual life, the pastor assumes the rôle of father. Has he not spiritual children, who are growing up and bursting forth as it were, into promising buds in his own house? Perhaps he has set his heart on a promising, energetic, lively youth whose wholesome boyishness has attracted him. But lo! this apple of his eye brings pain to his heart. Scarcely has he left school, when he starts on the downward path, falls in with evil companions, and shortly is one of their kind. The reports that come to his spiritual and earthly father are like to those

of the prodigal son, who lost his innocence and vigor of youth in the company of evil men and women, who cast over board his faith as well as his honor, and finally arrived at the low estate of a feeder of swine.

The heart of the pastor sorrows. He prays for the wandering sheep, follows him with tearful eyes, yet hopes and perseveres in prayer. And when at length the poor wanderer returns—*quantum mutatus ab illo*—and all the countryside glances furtively at him, the priest offers him a haven of mercy and compassion. Indeed, in the life of every priest such scenes are recalled in the sobbing words: "*Pater, peccavi. . . .*"

2. And alas! it is even possible that this parable has another application in the life of a priest, that he is the prodigal son himself.

The first fruits after ordination were dedicated to God. Then came the worm of passion, spoiled that fruit, killed the buds, and even blighted the tree. First the thought, then the desire, and, finally the deed.

And where did it end? God forbid that there was a descent to the level of the beast!

Then the awakening, contrition, the bitter pangs of homesickness, and finally the stern resolve: "*Surgam, ibo ad Patrem.*"

#### 148. *Two Masters—Serving God and Man*

1. "No servant can serve two masters." (Luke xvi, 13).

No, not even a priest. It is impossible to be a true

servant of God and an accommodating servant of men, a supporter of God's laws and an abettor of man's vagaries, a loyal son of the Church and simultaneously a follower of the *Zeitgeist*; in short it is impossible to serve God and be a slave of the world.

2. Our Lord uncovers one of these impossibilities: "You cannot serve God and Mammon."

Worship of God and Mammon are as incompatible as worship of Jehova and Dagon in the same temple.

There is scarcely anything that kills the priestly spirit so quickly as avarice and covetousness, the despicable vices of the Jewish clergy, who converted all things, even the holiest, into merchantable wares. This avarice made a traitor of an Apostle of Our Lord; it spread its slime over the Christian world in the form of simony and barter in ecclesiastical preferments, which prepared the way for the great religious upheaval of the sixteenth century.

Avarice not only degrades the soul of the priest, but his sacred calling as well. It commercializes the work of the sacred ministry, it places a price on the Sacraments as a listed article of sale, and it taxes the faithful according to their buying power. Scarcely another vice so hardens the soul as avarice.

3. "Now the Pharisees, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him." Avarice closes the door of the soul to the action of grace. The sinfulness of avarice is not immediately apparent. The mantle of thrift and economy is thrown over the despicable vice and so there is deception of self and others, though not of God.

“You are they who justify yourselves before men, but God knoweth your hearts.”

149. *Dives and Lazarus—The Eternal Compensation—Dealing With the Novissima*  
(Luke xvi, 19 sqq.)

1. In a few bold strokes our Lord depicts for us, as He alone can, the solution of the great question which troubles so many people: Why this unequal distribution of wealth; why this useless surplus for one and pinching poverty for another; why this apparent dangling of the unjust and humbling of the just? Why all this if an omnipotent God really exists?

The answer lies in the fact that the compensation is made in eternity. Of what value to the rich man in hell is his short-lived earthly joy? What loss is it to Lazarus in Heaven that he suffered want in this life? How the discrepancy vanishes when measured by eternal standards!

Unending pain follows worldly joys, unending bliss follows earthly suffering. All's well that ends well. Eternity places a true value upon fortune and misfortune.

2. Is not this same scene of wretched poverty before the gate of excessive riches re-enacted every day in almost every parish? With few exceptions, all those stricken by dire poverty do not display the patience of Lazarus. It is the duty of the priest to point out that true compensation can only come in eternity, though it is also his duty to help remove the

manifest injustices of an economic system which produces such inequalities as are everywhere apparent in our own time.

3. The *novissima* have not lost their power for good upon souls. Our Lord demonstrates how they are to be used. Brief, striking, lightning-like flashes. There are no long drawn-out explanations of the pains of hell, no lengthy reflexions on eternal punishment. In a few powerful words He presents to us the striking and terrible contrasts between reward and punishment.

4. There is still another fact that is made clear in this parable.

Of late a new theory has been devised, which declares that no sin but open rebellion against God can separate man from him. But did the rich man sin thus? There is nothing in the Gospel to warrant our believing this. He was not an unbeliever, but recognized Moses and the Prophets. His heart was open to his brethren at least. He was no crass egotist who lived but for himself and his own enjoyment, unconcerned about dire poverty; and yet his death notice reads: "He died and was buried in hell."

150. *Scandal—in the Church and among the Clergy.*

#### *A. Unavoidable Scandals*

"For it must needs be that scandals come."  
(Matt. xviii, 7).

We may well be thankful for these words of our Lord. How easily otherwise should we be led to dour



discouragement at the sight of the many scandals which besmirch the pages of ecclesiastical history and arise like ghosts to wander into the present to disturb our peace and equanimity. How hideous they appear against the clear white background of the religion of Jesus Christ and His sacred ministry. Every period of history has had its scandals. Behold the frivolities of the Renaissance popes, the desecration of sacred things at the time of the Protestant Reformation, the evils in convents and cloisters, the apostasies and sacrileges committed during the French Revolution. Up to the very steps of the sanctuary the flood of evils rose and left its muck and slime.

Our Lord looks sadly into the future, beholds all this and declares: "It must needs be that scandals come."

In spite of his prevision, He retracts none of His promised blessings, but so disposes that the Church shall be left unharmed.

But woe to the man through whom scandal comes, and three times woe to him through whom scandal comes if he is one who should have been the light and salt of the earth!

### *B. Clerical Scandals*

"Woe to the man, through whom scandals come."  
(Matt. xviii 7).

1. It must be remarked here that these words were spoken directly to the disciples and through them to the clergy (cf. Matt. xviii, 1 sqq.; Mark ix, 34 sqq.) And why? Because priests are in greater

danger of giving scandal, and because the scandal they give is far more disastrous than that from any other source.

The priest is, as it were, set upon a pedestal and constantly in the eyes of all. What would be excused in a layman is never excused in him. Just as he is a guide and beacon to thousands, so he may become the occasion for the fall of thousands.

Have not great defections in the ranks of the faithful been preceded, yes! even led by apostate or fallen priests? The Last Judgment alone can reveal how many souls were lost through the instrumentality of clerical scandal.

“Woe! Woe! to the giver of scandal!”

2. But there is suffering not only among the members of the fold, but among the shepherds as a class. It is unfortunately true that the sin of one becomes the sin of all. Hence the clerical scandal-giver does a great injustice to his brother clerics.

The priesthood may be likened to the sun. We are scarcely conscious of the daily rising and setting of the sun unless there be an eclipse or a long period of dark, cloudy weather. So, too, may the priesthood go daily about its indispensable work, without the least recognition. Its presence, its labors, its wonderful influence is somehow taken for granted. But let there be one defection, one fall, the smallest cloud across the face of the priesthood, and all eyes are turned towards it. “Behold the hypocrites, the Pharisees! Thus are they all!” goes up the cry. An ungrateful and fickle world has passed judgment, and

for years such a verdict may be the unexpressed opinion of a whole district. Such wounds are slow to heal. "Woe, Woe to the giver of scandal!"

### 151. *Fraternal Correction and Reconciliation—Clerical Irreconcilableness*

"But if thy brother shall offend against thee, go and rebuke him between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou shalt gain thy brother." (Matt. xviii, 15; cf. Luke xvii, 3 sq.).

I. We have here the teaching of our Lord, which you, as a priest, communicate to the people. But do you practice what you preach?

Alas! human nature is taken into the priesthood; a clerical irreconcilable is frequently the most stubborn and unyielding of men.

"But why not approach him, talk the matter over calmly and quietly and come to an understanding?"

"Impossible; he is at fault and should make the first approach," replies the irreconcilable.

In the case of an offending layman, the first step is the most difficult. You, on the contrary have been schooled in self-control, renunciation, self-effacement. For you, there should be no insurmountable obstacle. But alas! the wound grows more virulent and, perhaps, even becomes incurable. In the first stages the heeding of the Master's admonition would have brought about a speedy reconciliation.

What scandals can arise from differences between clergymen and laymen, between parishes, or even

between priests in the same house! For long periods silence reigns supreme, whilst the scandal grows and spreads.

Better take the first step. God will reward you richly and you will have "gained a brother." Such reconciliations have been the basis of long and lasting friendships.

2. And more. Is it not possible that those long periods of aridity at the altar have their origin in the hot blast of enmity that has blown across your soul? Can your Eucharistic Lord give you the kiss of peace, while you are at war with one of His children? "Go and reconcile thyself first with thy brother," and then come again, and I will greet thee with a friendly smile.

In the early Church the faithful gave one another the kiss of peace before Communion. Recall this when you come to the Pax in the Holy Sacrifice.

#### 152. *Vitandus—The Priest's Conduct Towards Non-Church Goers*

"And if he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican" (Matt. xviii, 7)

1. Our Lord lays down one exception to the rule regarding reconciliation. Personal differences should be ironed out quietly and quickly. But it is otherwise in cases of open and public estrangement with the Church. She, of course, will make approaches towards an understanding, but if the renegade persists in his revolt, if he continues to flout the

authorities, he is to be treated as a *vitandus* and must suffer the consequences of his rebellion. The Apostle of the Gentiles writes: "And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed" (2 Thess. iii, 14 sq.).

In such cases the pastor must not seek reconciliation at the cost of vital concessions. He must be firm like the Church herself, no matter what may follow.

2. But the *vitandus* must be made to feel that the Church is ever ready to receive him and will never deny him reconciliation in this life.

"Yet do not esteem him as an enemy," says St. Paul in this connection, "but admonish him as a brother."

153. *The Unforgiving Servant—Severe and Considerate Confessors*  
(Matt, xviii, 23-25)

1. It is a fact that, in general, the most pious and saintly priest is the most considerate confessor. He is an *alter christus*, Himself a paragon of holiness, and yet full of mercy and compassion towards sinners.

On the other hand, there are priests whose weaknesses have brought them very low, whom God has forgiven time after time, and who nevertheless, in spite of all, are bitter and sharp and unyielding in the confessional.

Does not this parable apply to the lives of such priests? And is not the judgment of God applicable

to them:—"Thou wicked servant, I forgive thee all the debt, because thou besoughtest me: shouldst thou not then have had compassion also on thy fellow servant, even as I had compassion on thee?"

2. You, too, have experienced the deadening depression of a guilty conscience, the painful difficulty of a contrite confession. But you were fortunate in having a compassionate confessor as your confidant. You were liberated from your burden, you breathed freely once more, you dared to hope again. And then? Then you entered the confessional and took your place as a tyrant might re-assume his throne. Your penitents quailed before your autocratic, high-handed methods. And God should not grow angry with you!

If many a priest were treated as he treats his penitents, he would rise up as one whose wound had been heartlessly probed and walk away in high dudgeon.

#### 154. *"Increase our Faith"—The Priest's Prayer* (Luke xvii, 5)

1. This is eminently the priest's prayer, a prayer which should be on his lips always.

What is a priest without the spirit of faith, he, whose life is steeped in the supernatural?

A priest without faith at the altar, at the consecration, in the pulpit, in the confessional, at the death-bed!

The most sacred actions become mechanical to

him; the holiest become common, every-day routine.

"Lord, increase our faith."

2. Whence arises the sad lack of reverence, piety, holy recollection, and unction, if not from a lack of living faith?

Miserable priest, steeped in the *Zeitgeist*, poisoned by modern rationalism, infected by the influenza of Modernism, how can you radiate warmth when you yourself are so cold, how can you illuminate when you yourself are devoid of light.

Woe to the professors and teachers who instill into the hearts of young candidates for the priesthood a spirit of doubt instead of reverence and submission for the authority of the Church, a spirit of Protestant subjectivism and criticism and make of them rationalists! "It were better that a millstone. . . ."

#### 155. *Master and Servant—Whole-hearted Devotion to Duty*

"But which of you having a servant ploughing, or feeding cattle, will say to him, when he is come from the field: Immediately go, sit down to meat: and will he not rather say to him: make ready my supper, and gird thyself, and serve me, whilst I eat and drink, and afterwards thou shalt eat and drink" (Luke xvii, 7 sqq.).

1. The Master takes rank before the servant. How true this is in the life of every good priest!

The day has been an exacting one. Instructions, appointments, business matters, sermon preparation, study and conferences have brought weariness to his



soul and body. The pastor returns to his study, ready to enjoy an evening of quiet, peaceful comfort. But the unexpected happens; a sick-call, an anxious visitor, an urgent conference steps between him and his well-deserved rest. Resigning himself to God's will, he says, *Fiat*, so let it be: I must be about my Father's business, for the Master comes before the servant.

Or the day's work has dragged its weary way well into the night. It has been a full day, a hard day, deserving of a timely end. But it cannot be. Duty to God prevents:—the divine office remains to be said. It had been impossible to fulfill this duty sooner. And so, well into the night, the priest raises his voice to God: "*Aperi Domine*," and it is midnight before he has finished. But that is understood and accepted as an unquestioned duty. The Master comes before the servant.

2. "Doth he thank that servant for doing the things which he commanded him? I think not. So you also, when you shall have done all these things that are commanded you, say: We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which we ought to do." (Luke xvii, 10).

Who will question the evident common-sense of these words? And yet they are just as difficult to put into practice as they are evident. They presuppose a humility and self-effacement which in this degree of perfection is certainly uncommon.

To do and to do well the things that duty commands is the earnest endeavor of every good priest.

But it must be admitted that, after the accomplishment, the human heart craves some recognition and reward. He inventories for himself and his people the good that he has accomplished and balances the account with an equivalent reward. How seldom self-effacement can truly speak the words of St. Ignatius in his beautiful prayer for magnanimity in the service of God: "Teach me to serve Thee—without awaiting any reward other than the knowledge that I have fulfilled Thy Holy Will. Amen." (See the whole prayer at end of this book).

### 156. *Bethania—Visiting Families*

"Jesus loved Martha and her sister Mary and Lazarus." (John xi, 5).

1. There are souls for whom our Lord has an especial love, souls in every walk of life, in all strata of society, in the cloister, in the world, among the rich and the poor. They stand in an especially close relationship to God.

"Jesus loved."

Here is the model, indeed, here is the origin of true Christian friendship. And well it is, for by it the cleric can measure the standard of his own friendships.

2. The priest, too, has forsaken his Nazareth, and there is no place, in the meaning of men, which he can call home. Indeed! the secular priest is often more isolated than the religious, who has in his own community a *modus vivendi* which may be likened to that in a family.

So it may be that the priest may at times feel a longing, almost a necessity, for the spirit of the family circle. There is scarcely a parish in which there are not one or more families whose circumstances make possible an intimate communication with their pastor. They welcome him to their homes and he moves among them as one of their own. Many a pleasant hour he spends in this circle.

3. But like all good and beautiful things this too may become a vice. Fitness and moderation should ever accompany such visits. Even elevated friendships have an element of danger lurking in them. *Latet anguis in herba.*

The finest fruits of friendship are those of the spirit; the table and the drawing-room are mere physical aids for the better garnering of the fruit.

Our Lord frequents Bethania in the spirit of the finest friendship, as is evident from His words: "Martha, Martha, but one thing suffices." It is rather a giving than a taking on His part. And yet, He does not lay Himself out for edification. The priest's visiting should be done in the spirit of Bethania.

#### 157. *The Sickness of Lazarus—Christ a Model of Pastoral Sick Care*

"Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." (John xi, 3).

1. Lazarus is sick. His sisters lovingly attend him; but his condition becomes worse, and their anxiety

increases. There is but One who can help, and so word is sent to Him.

In your parish, it is *you* to whom the messengers come in breathless haste: "Father, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick!"

2. If the priest but knew at times the quaking fear that haunts the sick-room, the tearful eyes that watch the ebb and flow of life, the anxiety that awaits his coming, lest he be too late! With what haste would he come to the bedside of the dying.

"Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick."

3. Blessed the pastor of whom this may be said. His love goes out to all his people, even to the least of them. If there is one in danger, not duty but a warm personal love sends him in haste to succor his stricken child.

"Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick."

Indeed, though it were the least of his flock, the lowliest among his children, the poorest outcast! The affection which has its source in the love of God knows no distinction.

Is this true in your case?

158. *Too Late*—"Died without the Sacraments"

"Jesus still remained in the same place two days." (John xi, 6).

1. Why did the Master tarry in this instance, in the case of one whom He loved so tenderly and for whose nearest kin He had so great an affection?

Why does He not hasten to his bed-side with all possible speed?

Instead, He permits the darkness of sorrow to deepen over Bethania, whilst Mary and Martha are being racked by anxiety and doubt.

He does not come—even in the last and final hour. Lazarus dies, and Christ was not present!

Why? The Master tells us why:

“This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God: that the Son of God may be glorified by it.”

There is question here of the greater honor and glory of God. And where this is at stake, the most intimate and personal relationship must be relegated to the background. This was the occasion of Christ's last and greatest miracle, which so strikingly revealed His divinity.

2. Of course, such an instance is not duplicated in the life of a priest. He cannot raise the dead to life and hence may not delay his visit to the sick. Should one of his flock die without the Sacraments through his fault, with what remorse must he face the sorrowing relations! “Had you come when we sent for you, our father, brother, had not gone into eternity without the Sacraments.”

You are branded, then and there, as a poor shepherd of your sheep. One of your flock has been lost, perhaps forever, because your own comfort and self-seeking came first.

3. The people have an inherent sense of fitness about these matters, with which they accurately meas-

ure and guage their priests. A difficult, unfavorable journey undertaken without regard for personal comfort or consideration of any kind, in order that the priest may be present at the bedside of a dying man, is highly appreciated.

But what of the conviction that settles down over a community when they learn that "So-and-So died without the last Sacraments because the pastor delayed his coming and arrived too late."

### 159. *The Call of Painful Duty—Priestly Heroism*

"Jesus said to His disciples; Let us go into Judea again. The disciples say to him: Rabbi, the Jews but now sought to stone thee: and goest thou thither again? . . . Thomas . . . said to his fellow disciples: Let us also go, that we may die with him." (John xi, 7 sq., 16).

This incident, too, is repeated again and again in the life of the Church.

1. Persecution rages, priests are hunted, religious expelled and churches desecrated. Christ has apparently withdrawn, for the time being, and gone to a secluded retreat. But the cry arises: "Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick." He is unable long to resist. He must return to the place of combat. "Let us return again!" Their importunings are bootless. "Master, only recently your enemies sought to kill you."

But no matter. Duty and love call. A steadfast

companion cries out: Arise, let us go and die with him! And they go.

How many thousands of such examples of heroism are to be found in the annals of all lands! The faith has been nourished everywhere by the blood of martyrs. *Eamus et moriamur cum illo!* Perseverance even unto death!

2. And in times of pestilence, epidemics, calamities, and catastrophes, when death's harvest is heavy, and there is a fleeing from its clutches, then again the courageous word is repeated by God's priests: "*Eamus et moriamur cum illo.*"

## 160. *The Death of Lazarus—The Priest Among the Bereaved*

### A. *The Death-Chamber*

Frequently it becomes the duty of a priest to enter a house from which death has taken its toll, where the shadows of sorrow have lengthened.

How strange the silence where but recently the laughter of life was heard!

Everywhere there are tearful eyes, suppressed sobs. There in the death-chamber lie the remains. Relatives and friends come and silently approach the coffin to pay their last respects. Each visit of those near and dear opens the flood-gates of sorrow anew.

The priest enters, the beloved, respected pastor, a good and true friend of the bereaved family. He is the most welcome of all the visitors. His visit at this



time is cherished above all others. He cannot take away the pain entirely, but he can alleviate, he can elevate and sanctify it. He consoles the bereaved and from the well of his own abundant pity and compassion, he pours a healing, soothing balsam into the open wounds.

Priest of God, what lessons lie in the Master's visit to Bethania, to the house which death had entered. What He does and says, and how He consoles the afflicted,—these are your guides for such visits.

#### *B. Priestly Compassion*

What does the Master say? He does not utter the cold, meaningless words which the world employs. More is demanded also of the priest. He goes immediately to the substance of things, to the source of true consolation, such as faith alone can give.

"Thy brother shall rise again . . . he that believeth in me, although he be dead, shall live. Believest thou this?" (John xi, 23 sqq.)

Immortality, reunion in Heaven, these are the truths to which the priest must direct attention at this time.

"Only a short time and you will see me again."

#### *C. Priestly Sympathy*

Such considerations are, of course, conducive to greater, rather than less sorrow if they are cold and uninspired. They must be permeated with true pity and compassion.

Such allusions strengthen the failing spirit, while

the breath of genuine compassion is as a cooling breeze across a fevered brow.

Tearful sorrows are perfectly natural and must be allowed to run their course. To forcibly restrain them would be to compel new channels of sorrow to form.

No, the Master does not reproach the sisters of Lazarus for their tears; rather, He sympathizes with them in their sorrowing.

"And weeping He groaned in the spirit, and troubled himself. . . ." so sincerely that all who saw it said: "Behold how He loved him."

In this there is comfort, relief and consolation. It is likewise a wholesome unburdening of the soul.

And yet, through it all, Christ maintains His calm dignity, His priestly composure. He stoops to human sorrow, yet is not overwhelmed by it. Only in this manner can He hope to raise the downcast to Himself.

### 161. *The Raising of Lazarus—Spiritual Awakenings*

"He cried with a loud voice: Lazarus, come forth! And presently he that had been dead came forth." (John xi, 43 sq.)

1. These powers of the Master are not shared by the priest, regardless of how much they are coveted. There are moments, no doubt, in the life of every priest, when he would fain possess the power of working miracles, which is, in a limited way, the privilege of the Saints.

He stands at the death-bed or at the open grave of a father, mother, or child. A terrible blow has fallen upon this faithful family. And yet, how ardently they prayed! Masses were said, prayers enlisted, good works performed; the good pastor counceled hope. Here surely God would give a merciful answer to prayers and petitions! But no; the sick one dies, and the sorrow of his kinsfolk is immeasurable, illimitable. They are unable to understand or comprehend. "Oh! had you been here, he would not have died." "O God! why did you allow this to happen?"

And the misfortune strikes home to the priest. Did he not counsel trust in God's assistance? He, too, is dejected, downcast, disillusioned.

How gladly the priest in such cases would stretch forth his hand and recall the dead to life! He stands there helpless, with folded hands. He, who had essayed so much, now can only fall back upon a furtive reference to the future reunion in Heaven.

2. But in the world of grace the priest is not without the experience of recalling a dead person to life. In the confessional, at the sick-bed, he has, through his powers conferred from on high, called to those long dead in spirit and lo! they "presently came forth."

The call of grace frequently penetrates into graves of sin and death-chambers of rebellion, to awaken those that lie buried there. And there is wonderment and worship for the power of God that is superior to death—to the death of the soul as well as to the death of the body.

*"Lazarus, veni foras."*

162. *The Jewish Malcontents—Unreliable Friends*

“But some of them [the Jews] went to the Pharisees, and told them the things that Jesus had done [in Bethania]. (John xi, 46 sqq.)

1. How despicable is the trait here depicted! In Bethania these people simulated a friendship, even a sympathetic sharing of the sorrows of this bereaved family.

They were among the mourners, indeed, among those who witnessed the miracle wrought by Our Lord. Then they return to the inimical Pharisees and interpret the event they had witnessed with a sinister motive.

2. This spineless, characterless sycophancy is to-day still enjoying a robust life. Unfortunately, even priests are among those who practice it. There are those who enter not only the dwelling of a fellow-priest, but his heart as well. They win his complete confidence. They sit at table with him, enter into the closest communion with him, only to go forth and at the first opportunity approach the enemy and display what they have stolen. “He said this, and did that; we saw and heard it ourselves.”

3. So, too, the Church suffers at the hands of traitors in her own ranks. There are liberals, ultra-modern, “intellectual” Catholics, who are not ashamed to spread among non-Catholics, even the enemy, information of persons and events which should have remained secret, or at least be imparted only to the proper parties. All this the Master experienced before us.

163. *The Logic of Unbelief and Hatred—Muzzling the Church*

“The chief priest therefore, and the Pharisees, gathered a council, and said: What do we, for this man doth many miracles? If we let him alone so, all will believe in him. . . .” (John xi, 47 sq.)

1. These are, strangely enough, the exact words and actions of the present-day enemies of Christ’s Church. Why this animosity against the Church, this chicanery and these preventive measures directed at her activities? Is it not the fear of her power? “If we give Catholic bishops and religious orders free rein, Rome will dominate our country and enslave us all,” thus spoke the leaders of the Kulturkampf in Germany.

Thus the Church is muzzled, her free and untrammelled development is hindered.

2. What is the motive underlying the expulsion of priests and religious in various countries, at a time when the fullest freedom is granted to the press, to organizations, nay, even to religious anarchism?

“If we let him alone, all will believe in him. . . .”

3. Finally, it comes to such a pass that the persecuted disciples do as Christ once did: “Wherefore Jesus walked no more openly among the Jews; but he went into a country near the desert, unto a city that is called Ephrem, and there he abode with his disciples.” (John xi, 54).

164. *The Ten Lepers—Undisposed Penitents*

"And as he entered into a certain town, there met him ten men that were lepers, who stood afar off."  
(Luke xvii, 12 sqq.)

This entire incident is of a piece with daily experience in the pastoral life of the priest. The number of lepers who approached him at times is great.

1. They "stood afar off and lifted up their voices, saying: Jesus, master, have mercy on us!"

These unfortunates were held at a distance by legal enactment; to-day, in the case of spiritual leprosy, it is shame, the fear of ridicule, stubbornness and enslavement that keeps the sinners away.

And yet their state is so miserable, their misfortune so depressing, that where some underlying goodness still remains, they long for release from their bonds and cry out piteously: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"

2. And the Lord pities them and sends you to them. "Go and show yourselves to the priests."

They come, shameful, quivering, yet hoping, uncertain what the outcome will be. Receive them compassionately and lighten their burdens!

Whilst they continue to come, there is still hope of betterment.

To receive them roughly, unkindly, might mean the severance of the last tie that still holds them to the Church.

"But," we hear, "these unclean, boorish spirits come

only to unload their burden of filth in the easiest, quickest manner."

That may be; but that they come at all is a gain—a result of prevenient grace.

But "they are ill disposed." True, and hence you should dispose them properly. You have them now within the power of your word. You have the opportunity to speak to them and move their hearts, as you could do at no other time or place. You now have it within your power to save a poor, lost soul.

They are present: that is sufficient. It is clear from this that a tiny spark, at least, lies hidden beneath the ashes, which can be fanned into a flame. Properly chosen and inspired words can save them.

3. Granted, this is the most difficult task of the confessor, and one which fills the confessional with so many thorns and thistles. It is like a delicate surgical operation. It is necessary to apply the knife with steady, yet considerate hand, to cut away the infected parts without being overcome by disgust and nausea.

This you must do; the Lord expects it of you; He has sent these poor unfortunate sinners to you. "Go show yourselves to the priests."

### 165. *Ingratitude—a Bitter Experience of the Priest*

"Were not ten made clean? and where are the nine?" (Luke xvii, 17).

1. The most poignant sorrow in a priest's life comes from the ingratitude of men. A priest's evil deeds are carved in stone, his good deeds are written in sand.



The very first gust of wind and rain obliterates all traces. And yet, who has suffered more bitterly at the hands of ungrateful men than the Master? How deeply He felt this ingratitude He discloses by the words: "Were not ten made clean? and where are the nine?"

2. Poor pastor! You recall the many children for whom you toiled and labored: how many were thankful? Is it one in ten?

And what of the sick to whom you devoted so much time and energy? Scarcely are they well, and everything is forgotten.

Indeed, he who expects human gratitude is bound to be sorely disappointed.

3. "There is no one found to return and give glory to God, but this stranger."

So, too, in the life of the priest! The stranger whom he befriended returns to give thanks, whereas the children of the fold go on unheeding, the keen edge of their appreciation dulled by constant use.

166. *"The Kingdom of God Cometh Not With Observation"*—*The Inherent Power of the Church and Its External Manifestation*  
(Luke xvii, 20)

1. The Jews, even the disciples of Jesus, entertained strange ideas of the kingdom of God. The Messiah was pictured as a victorious king, riding to his glory with all the pomp and splendor of the military conqueror. The theocracies of David and Solomon were to be resurrected.

In contrast to this our Lord continually pointed out that the Messianic kingdom was not of this world, that its strength lay in its indwelling spirit, that it was essentially a spiritual kingdom, whose material manifestations would be but a poor reflection of the original.

He likened it to the mustard-seed, which grows and develops slowly, and to the leaven which permeates the entire mass unseen.

How obscure were the beginnings of Christ's kingdom on earth—like His birth and infancy and His thirty years of hidden life in the despised Nazareth. And, later, the Church in the catacombs, then in the Roman cities, finally in the Empire itself—how like the unnoticed bit of leaven in the mighty mass, and yet transforming it all.

2. The words of Our Lord, that "the kingdom of God cometh not with observation," should encourage and strengthen the wavering spirits of those of His priests who toil amid the disheartening surroundings of the modern pagan city.

Where is this kingdom? When will it come? you may well ask. It is here, only in the seed, perhaps, yet germinating, sprouting, growing. In time it will develop into a magnificent resting-place for wayfarers.

3. It is true, of course, that this spiritual kingdom of Christ manifests itself as a visible, growing and living organism; in fact, an empire spread throughout the world. But this exterior manifestation and greatness is not an essential characteristic. It is not even a measure of its real greatness.

History records periods in which the Church was externally great and powerful; yet who will say that these were always the times of her greatest spiritual activity?

“The kingdom of God is within you.”

The true reign of Christ is in the hearts of men, in so far as His spirit suffuses their souls.

4. The Church’s greatest treasure are her spiritual gifts: the life of virtue, the holiness of her faithful children. These hidden beauties are for the most part invisible. How different would be the judgment of the world if it could but look into this interior world.

This is the privilege of the priest. He not only beholds these beauties, but he discovers them and helps to enhance them.

“The kingdom of God is within you.”

#### 167. *The Parable of the Unjust Judge—Partiality to the Rich*

1. This parable contains a valuable hint for the priest, besides its very obvious principal lesson.

The question immediately arises: Why did the judge allow the woman to wait so long and show himself so little disposed to give her friendly assistance? Was it because she was a widow?

Had a man of wealth approached him, he would have been far more solicitous. But it was only a poor widow.

2. But what of spiritual rulers and magistrates? Are there not, here and there, two or three classes of

weddings, funerals, etc., just as there are classes on steamers? Service, well appointed, courteous, obliging service for the first class. What the third class receives is only too painfully plain.

There is no question but that differences in social standing must be taken into consideration. But such regard should not influence the manner of the priest's intercourse with even the lowliest.

How does our Lord deal with the lowly? How often are they mentioned in the gospel narrative? (Cf., *inter alia*, Luke ii, 37, iv, 25 sqq.; vii, 12; xx, 47; xxi, 2 sq.) It is as if He would commend them in an especial manner to our charity and mercy.

#### 168. *Pharisee and Publican—Uncharitable Comparisons and Superficial Judgments*

1. "O God, I give thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, as also is this publican." (Luke xviii, 11).

With an artist's brush Our Lord depicts two types of men, and they are as frequent to-day as when He first portrayed them.

With a haughty air, the folds of his cloak thrown back to advantageous display, his hypocritical eyes rolling heavenwards, the Pharisee stands before us as the avatar of perfect self-complacency. His prayers drip from his lips with sickening sweetness. "Lord, I thank thee that I am not like other men."

2. It is scarcely possible to find a likeness among God's priesthood to this disgusting presentation.

But there is always a grave danger that uncharitable comparisons will be made, either with other priests, or with the priests of other provinces and countries where conventions and social usages are in strong contrast with those of the community we know and which we take for granted. The pharisaical monologue is then repeated and disdainful glances are directed at the publican provinces.

Occasionally, too, if expression were given to the interior thought of various priests and religious, it would resemble the words of the Pharisee: "I thank thee that I am not as the rest of men."

3. There is a further lesson for the pastor contained in this parable, namely, that he should withhold judgment concerning the members of his congregation. Outward appearances are deceiving. It is difficult and dangerous to form a judgment concerning the interior life of any person. Only God can adequately gauge the hearts of men.

How many diamonds in the rough there are and how many of paste, whose outward appearances belie true worth and beauty! Often the pastor is not acquainted with a soul of exquisite qualities hidden beneath a rough and unprepossessing exterior.

There once stood at the entrance to the church in an Italian village a bedraggled, footsore vagabond, whose quest of adventure had led him thither. Who could have divined that the words of the zealous priest would touch the heart of this soldier of fortune and transform him into a soldier of Christ? He became Saint Camillus Lellis?

169. *Admonition To Humility—No Humility of Weakness*

"Every one that exalteth himself, shall be humbled: and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted." (Luke xviii, 14).

1. Though humility is an indispensable virtue for all, it is particularly so for the priest. *Quid habes quod non acceperis?* How applicable to the priest of God! Hence he should not proudly elevate himself above others.

It is true that the priesthood is prized among Catholics above all other vocations. Yet no one realizes as well as the priest himself how little he personally is deserving of this honor. Pride in a priest is despised by both God and man, and the higher the respect for the position, the greater will be the disgust for the individual.

Persons of dignity and position in the world are expected to be reserved, distant, elevated, above the common level of mankind; but the priest is regarded otherwise. Is he not the representative of Christ, who was the shining example of humility and meekness?

2. The priest of God must be humble and manful withal. All self-expression is not evil. Genuine humility is based on truth. We must give expression to the truth in our dealings with ourselves, as well as others.

There is a form of humility which is rather a weakness than a virtue. The intention and not the mere outward form determines the value of an act. The

exterior manifestations will be different in different persons, characters, cases, etc.

The cleric of northern blood, owing to traditions of education, environment and convention, is likely to be, in general, of more aggressive personality than his religious brother of the south. There is in him less of the formal, more of the informal, less adornment, more simplicity and directness. He would make no impression on his flock with a weak, unaggressive personality.

True interior humility and an aggressive exterior are not incompatible.

3. Even in Christ, our Divine Master, we witness humility and meekness united to a manly strength, in complete harmony.

When His time comes, at the hour of His passion and death, He becomes the Lamb of God, and allows Himself to be led to the slaughter without a murmur. This was His Father's will. He humbled Himself and God raised Him up.

So, too, must every priest be prepared to suffer in all humility and be persecuted for Christ's sake.

But our Lord, whom we see so meekly and patiently suffering, can be authoritative, aggressive, nay even passionate with a holy anger, when occasion demands.

Resolutely and fearlessly He bears down upon the Pharisees, Scribes, and Herodians. To men of good will He is wonderfully meek and humble, but with His humility He unites a dignity that compels honor and respect.



Clerical humility must never be allowed to degenerate into weakness and debility of character, which would drag down with it respect for the priest's position and weaken his influence upon his flock.

170. *The Indissolubility of Marriage—Hard Consequences*

“Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that shall marry her that is put away, committeth adultery. . . . What God . . . hath joined together, let no man put asunder.” (Matt. xix, 9, 6; cfr. v, 32; Mark x, 2 sqq.)

1. How frequently the Church is charged with an intolerant and cruel policy in regard to matrimony. She can point to the unescapable words of the Gospel, words of our Lord Himself, which expressly declare the marriage tie to be indissoluble. But in vain.

“Cruel and unrelenting” is the verdict of the world, though Christ's teaching is unmistakable. Is not the Church doing her duty when she faithfully, unerringly discharges the command contained in the words: “Teach what I have taught”?

2. True, there are marriages which are tragic failures and which might give rise to the thought that separation would be better under the circumstances.

It is well then to turn to Christ and picture Him proclaiming to His disciples the indissolubility of the marriage tie. Let us recall that He did this, though He beheld all future ages and saw each individual

case, every unsuccessful as well as every successful marriage.

It is in the nature of universal laws that they lead in their application to hard consequences in individual cases.

These cases do not justify the abrogation of the law. Else the security and safety of the moral law would be menaced.

Such instances can be made striking object lessons to young people who are contemplating matrimony.

### 171. *Celibacy—Its Foundation in Christ*

“He that can take it, let him take it.” (Matt. xix, 12).

1. These words, which were addressed to the Apostles, are a *locus classicus* of especial interest in the matter of celibacy.

Our Lord here sharply contrasts two distinct vocations--that of matrimony and celibacy.

“If the case of a man with his wife be so, *i. e.*, that marriage is indissoluble, it is not expedient to marry,” is the opinion of the disciples.

Our Lord replies that abstention from marriage is commendable, if undertaken for higher motives, in order to gain eternal life. He clearly distinguishes between three classes of persons.

There are those who are by nature unfit for marriage, either by reason of an evil life, or because they choose to forego the privilege of marriage of their own free will.

The latter, however, are but few in number. For celibacy is not for the many, but for those whom God elects.

"Not all can understand the word, but only those to whom it is given."

But he who chooses virginity elects that which is good, beautiful, and praiseworthy.

2. How pitiful the objection to this call to heroicity, that it is impossible and unnatural.

It is *supernatural*, but in no sense *unnatural*.

The selection of the priesthood as a vocation is a matter of free choice, and is made at a time in the life of the person choosing, when, it is admitted by all, such a choice can be intelligently and thoughtfully made.

Moreover, such action is not without a most excellent precedent. Did not our Lord say: "I have given you an example, that as I have done, you may do also?"

Here is not only a precedent, but the highest ideal.

The Master in a very special manner sets apart those who leave home and hearth, father and mother, to follow Him in untrammelled attachment, as did the Apostles.

"Behold," says Peter, "we have left all," which our Lord so strongly sanctioned by the promise of a hundredfold reward.

3. It cannot be denied that Christ, Our Lord instituted a celibate priesthood.

It was impossible, of course, in the nature of the circumstances, that this status could be immediately

effected, particularly as the recruits were men of middle age.

*Vox populi, vox Dei.* Has not the celibate priesthood its foundation in the instinctive demands of the Catholic people? What would be their choice if they were called upon to express it? He who understands the Catholic viewpoint knows well that celibacy is considered an essential characteristic of the priesthood! The faithful look upon their priests as the representatives of Christ. But Christ is a virgin and the son of a virgin.

1. "Luther," remarks Nietzsche, "opened the way to marriage for the priesthood. But three-fourths of the reverence accorded by the masses to the priest is founded on the belief that celibacy raises him to a superior position. . . . After Luther had opened the way to marriage, he was forced to abolish auricular confession. That was psychologically correct, but it also removed the Catholic priest, whose greatest efficacy lay in the fact that in him was found a closed well, a sealed grave for the innermost secrets of the soul." <sup>1</sup>

## 172. *The Divine Friend of Children—Church and Youth*

"Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come to me: for the kingdom of heaven is for such."  
(Matt. xix, 14 sqq.)

<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Kaatz. *Die Weltanschauung Fr. Nietzsches.* Part II, p. 38, Dresden, 1892.

Perhaps no other words of Christ have found such complete fulfillment throughout the ages of the Church as these words of stirring appeal for the souls of the little ones.

1. "Suffer the little children to come to me."

This appeal of Christ should be indelibly imprinted on the mind of every pastor. His most precious charge should be the lambkins of the flock. The shepherd who fails in providing for them, fails in an important duty.

What is it that attracts the little ones to Christ?

Oh! they read in His eyes, His outstretched arms, His sympathetic kindness, that He loves them, that they are welcome to Him. Do they read the same message in *your* eyes?

2. "The kingdom of heaven is for such."

The true interpretation of this passage would seem to be more inclusive than the commonly accepted meaning. The latter restricts "kingdom of heaven" to Heaven. But "*regnum caelorum*" actually includes God's visible kingdom on earth. This leads to an interesting and valuable consideration.

Youth is the hope of this earthly kingdom; through it Christianity must grow and renew itself. If the life of youth runs low, manhood can never rise high. The solicitude of the Church for her children is eminently after the mind and heart of Christ Himself, Hence the ever raging battle over the Catholic school and education.

3. "He took them to Him and blessed them."

Christ's love for children is a model of that fatherly affection which His representatives should strive to attain.

The same Lord who took the little ones to Himself, also holds a protecting hand over them and cries out the terrible words, which we have heard before: "He who scandalizes one of these little ones . . . "

### 173. *The Rich Young Man—Young Men and the Priest*

I. "And Jesus looking on him, loved him . . . " (Mark x, 21).

Priest and young man are a part of the same picture; they belong together. Such incidents as described above, are not infrequent in the life of a pastor.

An unsullied youth finds in a pious, worthy priest a confidant after his own heart.

He lays before him with unconscious ease the thoughts and stirrings of his budding soul, his plans and desires, his temptations and difficulties, and above all the important question: "Master, what must I do to enter into eternal life?"

In what manner can I best attain the end for which God placed me here on earth?

To whom shall he go for an answer if not to the priest? And as the latter looks into the depths of that beautiful, unsullied soul, which lies before him in the clear light of day, he, too, reflects: "All this have I done."

2. "Who, being struck sad at that saying, went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions." (Mark x, 22.)

Every priest has had similar experiences.

"If there is one who has a call to the higher life," muses the priest, "it is this youth, unsullied, pure, with his heart set on nobler things." Quietly, slowly, he leads him on the way to which God calls.

But alas! how frequently there is a returning because "the young man went away sorrowful."

Does the renunciation of this world's goods frighten him, or does the beckoning of worldly pleasure and adventure allure him?

Sadly the priest follows him in thought. Indeed, "not all can take it . . ."

"How difficult it is for the rich to enter . . ."

#### 174. *The Dangers of Wealth—Not Allowing One-self to Be Blinded*

"How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" (Mark x, 23 sq.)

1. How frequently the pastor of souls is made conscious of the tragic truth of these words.

The desire for earthly riches, which is the motive power for the amassing of large fortunes, has a deadly effect on the spiritual element in man. Perhaps no other vice is so damaging to the higher aspirations of the soul. The things of the spirit have no appeal for the avaricious. The rich man in the Gospel demanded privileges and exceptions even as re-



gards his entrance into Heaven. He wanted to travel first class, though the way is narrow and difficult. He cannot even conceive the part of a beggar, which we all actually are before God. He, who has always but spoken or nodded and had his every wish accomplished, should beg and plead and humble himself! Oh! "how difficult!"

2. But riches are a menace not only to the rich, but to those also who come under their spell. We all live in the miasmatic atmosphere of material wealth. We think in terms of it, the schools teach it. We are formed according to its standards, and even the Church, her ecclesiastics and her schools, are affected by its lethal vapors.

This kingdom of material wealth would rule all things, even the Church and her priests. It would make them subject to avarice and vitiate that moral force which alone can save man from complete slavery. Our priesthood must beware lest this deadly, secret, impalpable influence bind it hand and foot as the last step in its struggle to conquer the world.

#### 175. *The Reward of Poverty—Recognition of Goodness*

The word of St. Peter: "Behold, we have left all things," and the kind answer of the Master: "Amen, I say to you, that you . . . shall sit on twelve seats . . . and receive a hundredfold reward" (Matt. xix, 28 sq.), is in more than one way particularly consoling and instructive.

1. Our Lord in this instance, takes Peter at his word, though, in truth, it was far from according with the meaning which Christ had in mind.

2. The Master gladly recognizes goodness wherever He finds it and however small it may be! Do you, as priest and pastor, likewise joyfully give credit wherever it belongs? Generous recognition is the wine of life, the handmaid of ambition, and the aid to successful endeavor.

Christ too, will recognize what you have renounced and sacrificed for His sake.

3. "You will receive a hundredfold." Again and again our Lord repeats this motive of hope. It is the leitmotiv of His holy music.

He does not demand, as is shown by these words, that all things be done out of pure love for Him. Why, then, has God implanted the hope of reward so deeply in the human heart, if it were not meant to act as a powerful incentive to good?

It were well that the priest made frequent use of this motive of hope in his discourses and instructions. What else remains for the great mass of men, who must live continually with one eye on the abyss of poverty ahead and the other on the inaccessible heights of superfluous riches, basked in perpetual sunshine? Hold out to them the hope of the hundredfold reward which Christ promised to those who renounce all things for His sake. In this alone can man find true peace and happiness.

176. *The Laborers in the Vineyard*—"Obsecra,  
*Increpa*"

(Matt. xx, 1-6)

1. It is a fact, a sad fact, that laborers will not enter the vineyard of the Lord unsolicited; they must be urged and cajoled. Our Lord was even forced to go about to recruit them.

Five times Christ represents the householder in the parable as going about soliciting laborers, and each time he returns with but a few.

The zealous pastor acts in like manner. He knows how necessary the *increpa*, *obsecra opportune*, *importune* is for the majority of souls, who come only when pressure is brought to bear upon them.

Here and there in well-ordered parishes this may not be always necessary. But some will nearly always stand aloof: "No one hath hired us."

The pastor who comfortably graces the rectory, expecting the people to come of their own accord, knows not how many are remiss and waiting to be solicited. They would come if an effort were made to reach them.

2. How true this is in the large cities and centers of industry with their floating population, their "foreign" element, etc!

How many stand idly by, disregarding their religious duties, whilst no one comes to direct, invite, or urge them!

What surprises awaited the Catholic Church Ex-

tension Society in our own country when it ventured forth with its first chapel-car into districts seldom reached by a priest! By the hundreds and thousands they came, where before they were unknown as Catholics, and among them children who had never seen a priest or an altar!

There is, finally, the great heathen world that stretches before us, where men and women live ignorant of the vineyard of the Lord! They await the invitation.

"Why do you stand here idly by; go you also into my vineyard."

3. *The Eleventh Hour.* Though these hours indicate the various periods of human history, yet they may be interpreted as representing the different divisions of a life-time.

Grace knocks continually at the door of the human heart. As long as the fatal hour has not yet struck, it is still time.

Hence the householder goes out once more at the eleventh hour, *i. e.*, according to the ancient custom of dividing the day, the hour before evening.

There are perhaps those in your own parish whose eleventh hour has already struck and who yet stand idly by, doing nothing to merit the eternity to which they are destined. "Oh, it is too late; they are beyond help." Are these your thoughts? And yet Christ teaches us in this parable that it is never too late while life lasts. Many have been saved at the eleventh hour—for example, the thief on the cross—and participated in the reward prepared for them!

"The first shall be last and the last first."

Such instances are within the experience of every middle-aged pastor.

### 177. *The Hidden Mystery—Love of the Cross*

"And they understood none of these things, and this word was hid from them, and they understood not the things that were said." (Luke xviii, 34; cfr. Mark x, 32; Matt xvii, 22).

1. The *scandalum crucis* had sorely tried the Apostles,—men of the *élite*, the elect of Christ: Peter, Andrew, John, etc., who had sacrificed their all for the love of Him. They had been witnesses to His miracles, companions of His sacred life, His disciples, friends, and brothers.

Yet these words of suffering and the cross were beyond the slow comprehension of the Galileans.

Is it to wonder? They had not yet witnessed what we know as history, namely, the wonderful triumph of the Cross.

True, Peter had acclaimed Christ before all as the Son of the living God. But for them the kingdom of Christ was an earthly kingdom of power and splendor. A royal leader, who would suffer at the hands of men and die an ignominious death on the Cross, was simply unthinkable for them.

2. And as for us? Ah! yes, we write and preach in stirring words about the Cross and the love of the Cross, but we are disillusioned, disturbed, disheartened, if the Cross but once throws its shadow across our way.

Hence the words: "They understood nothing of these things;" and: "It was to them a puzzle, a *verbum absconditum*," are only too applicable to many of us.

178. *Salome—An Ill-Advised Plea*  
(Mark x, 35 sqq.; cfr. Matt xx, 20 sqq.)

Salome has come before the Master with her two sons, whom she gave to His service, to plead for them, that they might be given first place in the kingdom of God. A striking incident indeed!

"Then came to him the mother of the sons of Zebedee with her sons adoring him and asking something of him." (Matt xx, 20).

1. Salome had given her two sons, Jacob and John, along with their wealth, to the service of the Master. They are, in her eyes, the pearls of the Apostolic school; to them, of course, belongs the first place and the title of honor. "Master, say that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left, in thy kingdom."

Nor were there Salomes only in the time of Christ. There may be sons and daughters in the seminary and the cloister. Naturally no others are like them. So pious, learned, and useful are they, beyond compare! "How well my son preaches!" What naïve pride these mothers have.

There is another instructive application which this incident has to the daily life of the pastor.

The love of a mother binds her to the failings and follies of her children; it paints their accomplishments

in high lights and subdues their weaknesses. It induces them to lay before the pastor or teacher ill-founded complaints, ridiculous excuses, and foolish requests in behalf of a stubborn, ill-behaved child.

2. In what manner does our Lord receive Salome? He cannot grant her request, but He does not for that reason send her away with a curt, rude reply. He tempers His remarks in such wise that she departs consoled and satisfied.

Be not rude and ill-tempered over the idle request of a mother, no matter what her station in life.

Give her friendly advice, while you show her the impossible nature of her plea. Recall your own mother, who, perhaps, like Salome of old, made foolish demands in your behalf.

179. *The Blind Man from Jericho—Priest and Beggar*  
(Luke xviii, 35 sqq.)

1. Is there anything more pitiful than a blind man or a cripple? Thousands pass him by on the street without pity or compassion. Thus it is to-day, and so it was in Jericho.

But one of the many who hurry by, had mercy on the poorest and most needy of outcasts. This was Christ, the Saviour.

To Him the blind man turns in piteous supplication: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Nor was he passed by unheeded.

Hundreds before Him had passed by in cold carelessness; not so Our Lord. He has the poor unfor-



tunate man brought to Him and sympathetically inquires: "What wilt thou that I do to thee?"

The blind man makes no small request: "Lord, that I may see." Our Lord satisfies him without hesitation.

2. How do you conduct yourself towards such unfortunates?

True, there are so many frauds perpetrated in our large cities these days that it would be impossible and even unwise to give to every applicant. But this condition can never excuse a complete disregard of all cries for help. Far better to have given, though occasionally deceived, than never to have given at all. There is no deception in Heaven. What you give with a good intention will be rewarded, no matter what the actual results.

Moreover, it should never be forgotten that clerical conduct is not measured by the people in terms of the individual, but of the group. The fault of one is the fault of all. Any remissness of an individual in the matter of charity, personal or public, organized or unorganized, is, unfortunately, ascribed to the clerical body as a whole.

The good that is accomplished by clerical charity, beyond the direct effect, is immeasurable. There is nothing that bridges the gulf between Catholics and non-Catholics like the charity of the priest.

180. *The Chief of the Publicans of Jericho—the  
Aloofness of the "Anti-Clericals"*  
(Luke xix, 1-10)

"Zacheus, make haste and come down."

1. We have here a beautiful incident from the pastoral life of Jesus. Zacheus, the chief of the publicans in Jericho, belonged to a party which might be named after the fashion of our own day, "anti-clericals."

His position and duties set him apart from the "pious orthodox," who are not at all well disposed towards him, as their subsequent complaints revealed. But the man is above his position and station. He has heard of our Lord and His works and feels a mighty urge to know Him better. He fain would draw nigh, but dares not; rather he follows at a distance.

2. Would that there were always present among us priests who understood such souls and who reached out a guiding hand to help them over the difficulties that separate them from the Church!

How skillfully our Lord manages! He noticed the predicament of Zacheus, bade him come to Him, and requested an invitation to his house. And this sufficed.

Our Lord won him over to His cause. What a short time previous seemed impossible is now accomplished.

The chief of the publicans capitulates and with magnanimous spirit enters upon a new life.

"This day is salvation come to this house."

3. Is this incident without instruction for the pastor of to-day? Are there not men like Zacheus in your parish, who to all appearances are non-church-goers and even anti-clericals, and yet at heart are far otherwise? You avoid them and their company, allow them to go their way, and do nothing that might bring about a better understanding. And yet, how many there are with a heart like Zacheus. They have secretly longed, perhaps even arranged for a meeting; but to no avail. You did not stop, like our Lord at the sycamore tree, to call to them and seek a friendly hour with them. Instead you walked by in cold disdain, fearing lest an interview would precipitate difficulties. Your Zacheus went home devoid of hope and respect. To him salvation did not come. And why? Is it more difficult for you or him to take the first step toward a better understanding? The charity of Christ has but one answer.

### 181. *The Anointing of our Lord in Bethania*

(Matt. xxvi, 6 sqq.; Mark xiv, 3 sqq.; John xii, 1-11)

#### *A. Woman in the Service of the Master*

"Mary therefore took a pound of ointment of right spikenard, of great price, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment." (John xii, 3).

Our Lord is the guest in Bethania, of Simon, the Pharisee, who is now openly His friend. The Master

occupies the place of honor. Lazarus is sitting near by. Martha serves, for that is her privilege, and Mary gives the Master a sign of her grateful love. She spares not the costly spikenard (according to Mark xiv, 3 it was of the best in contrast to the less expensive leaf-spikenard). And then, that there might be perfection of service, she broke the alabaster box and poured the remainder over His head; soon the entire house was filled with a pleasant odor.

The divine cult has in woman an eager, efficient servant. What concerns our Lord and His Church elicits beautiful, self-sacrificing, loving service from the feminine sex. Was Mary's act, signifying her reverence, love, and gratitude,—not fitting and just?

Her deed has induced numberless women to serve Jesus in silent, self-sacrificing love. Our altar societies have their foundation in this little incident in Bethania. This loving service has made the house of the Lord and His tabernacle a place pleasing to our senses as well as our hearts.

“And the house was filled with the odor of the ointment.”

#### *B. The Complaint of Judas*

“Then . . . Judas Iscariot, he that was about to betray Him, said: Why was not this ointment sold for 300 pence and given to the poor?” (John xii, 4 sq.; cf. Mark xiv, 5).

In the midst of this beautiful scene arises a discordant note: “Why this waste?”

Judas is the mouth-piece of those who rise in com-

plaint against expenditures made for beautifying and embellishing the altar and the tabernacle of our Eucharistic Lord. His "*utquid perditio haec?*" resounds throughout the ages and alas! at times the words are repeated by God's own priests.

The words of Judas bespeak:—

(a) A lack of faith. He beheld in our Lord only the man; had he beheld in Him his God and Saviour, as Mary Magdalen did, could he have spoken of extravagance?

(b) A lack of love. True love measures not its gifts by rule or weight; nor does it ask: What is the cost?

(c) Hypocrisy. He talks of the "poor" and of "greater needs," whereas his only thought is of the 300 pence which have escaped his treasury.

"The poor," remarks our Lord, "you have always with you, but me you have not always."

Hence, though He identifies Himself closely with the poor ("what you do to the least of these you do to me") yet the manifestations of personal love to Him are recognized and accorded a particular reward.

It is the motive, the intention, that justifies or condemns expenditures in the service of God.

### *C. Tactless People*

"But Jesus said: Let her alone, why do you molest her? She hath wrought a good work upon me." (Mark xiv, 6; cfr. John xii, 7).

How tactless the boorish, uncalled for remarks of Judas among strangers, in the house of his Master's

friend! What did it concern him what Mary did, how she used her spikenard?

How tactfully our Lord takes up the discussion! The untimely criticism, the complaint of the disciple, has brought discord into the otherwise pleasant surroundings, just as at times happens to priests.

Our Lord smoothes out the difficulties. He employs no harsh words, no sharp retorts; that would only have accentuated the discord. He quietly overlooks the critical contention, while He praises the noble deed, directs attention to its higher meaning, and adds a glorious promise. The reference to His divinity is the best answer to the "*ut quid perditio haec?*"

The discords were thus subdued.

Frequently a prudent and tactful priest is able, under like circumstances, to subdue a rising discord or curtail a painful scene.

## 182. *The Entrance Into Jerusalem—Corpus Christi Processions*

(John xii, 12 sqq.; Luke xix, 29 sqq.; Mark xxi, 1 sqq.; Matt. 21, 1 sqq.; 14 sqq.)

1. "Do you see that we prevail nothing? behold, the whole world is gone after him." (John xii, 19).

These words of bitter complaint are common to the Pharisees and Sadducees of all times, when they see that, in spite of their calumnious efforts, the people cling to their priests and their religion. Howling helplessly, they cry out: "Do you see that we prevail nothing?"

They have left no stone unturned. The press, the theatre, organizations were the engines of their destructive wrath, by means of which they meant to destroy the Catholic priesthood. Here and there they wrought damage, to be sure. But contrary to their expectations, the central edifice of faith stands unharmed. And then let there come a day of great Catholic demonstration: the arrival of a papal delegate, a Eucharistic congress, a national Catholic assemblage, a mission,—and lo! in the very midst of the enemy's stronghold rings out the cry: "Hosanna to the Son of David!" There is consternation in the camp of the enemy, but to no avail.

2. And what of the Corpus Christi processions which are becoming more common with each passing year?

Christ is the heart of it all, surrounded by His disciples and priests. The faithful strew flowers, weave garlands, build arches, spread carpets, decorate streets and houses—and thus Our Lord, surrounded by His followers, passes through the streets. Cannons salute, bells ring out, and a thousand voices proclaim:

*"Lauda Sion Salvatorem!"—"Tantum ergo Sacramentum. . ."*

Incense rises heavenward, the monstrance gleams, and the faithful fall on their knees to receive in humble submission the blessing of their Lord and God.

Haughtily and disdainfully the unbeliever views this from a distance and asks: "Who is this one?" And now, as then, the answer comes back: "That is Jesus of Nazareth."



Thus Christ lives in His Church throughout the ages.

183. *The Triumph of the Priest—First Mass and Jubilee*

The priest of God is not only persecuted with Christ, but shares His triumphs as well. As our Lord when He entered Jerusalem, so also the priest on occasions is surrounded by a jubilant populace, acclaiming him their honor and glory.

1. Recall your first holy mass in the church of your home congregation, when the entire parish turned out to do you honor and their voices rose in acclamation: "Blessed is he who cometh in the name of the Lord."

Is not this your feast of the palms indelibly imprinted in your heart and mind? Your soul was filled with a holy conviction of the perfection and splendor of your divine calling!

2. After the springtime of your priesthood, with its budding and youth, came the summer, with its heat and growth; finally, autumn with ripe maturity and that other great day—your XXVth anniversary or silver jubilee. Again your good people celebrated this great event; again the cry arose: "Hosanna to our beloved priest and pastor!"

Palm Sunday and Good Friday, how close they follow each other! Here, too, in the life of a priest, his day of palms may be closely followed by days of sorrow and passion. "The servant is not above the Master."

184. *Jesus Weeps over Jerusalem—The  
Disappointment of Failure*

“And when he drew near, seeing the city, he wept over it, saying: If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace; but now they are hidden from thy eyes. For the days shall come upon thee. . . .” (Luke xix, 41 sq.)

1. The keen sorrow of failure is the undertone of the complaint of our Blessed Lord, which is an echo of his former sorrow, tearfully expressed in the words: “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often. . . .” Who but a priest of God can point to a sorrow like to this. He has felt the pangs of disappointment over the failure of hard, exacting, zealous labors. But the thought of Christ! Behold! He spared Himself in nothing. His infinite love and His miraculous works were prodigally spent, and yet He is forced to express His feelings in bitter disappointment. True, His divine disappointment has far less sorrow of disillusionment than pain for the misery of those who recognized Him not.

2. Are these not the experiences also of a pastor zealous for souls? Has he not frequently been forced to cry out: “Oh! if thou hadst known!”

He has kept faithful watch at the bedside of a dying man, but in the end has to confess failure. Sorrowfully he leaves: “Oh! if thou hadst known!”

He has spared no effort to save a youth from evil ways, to lead him back to the fold, away from his evil companions. But in vain. He rushes headlong

to destruction, while the priest cries out: "Oh! if thou hadst known!"

3. And yet it is noteworthy that, in spite of Christ's prevision of the destruction of the Holy City and the misery of its people, He did not relax His efforts by one iota.

Do your duty and leave the rest to God. No priest labors in vain. Who can measure success or failure here on earth? God alone can see the real results of our efforts.

185. *"They Sought to Destroy Him"—Separation from Rome*

"And the chief priests and the scribes and the rulers of the people sought to destroy him: and they found not what to do to him: for all the people were very attentive to hear him." (Luke xix, 47 sq.; cf. Mark xi, 18; Matt. xxi, 45 sq.).

I. Such might be the historical summary of the Church in our own day: "They heard it and sought to destroy Him."

Every public manifestation of Catholicity, the encyclicals of popes and the pastoral letters of bishops, every act of love and zeal, brings down the flood-gates of hatred, and the insinuations of the press clearly indicate a desire for the destruction of the Roman Church. The death of the Church is the life-dream of her enemies.

"And they found naught what to do to Him."

So likewise to-day. If only the earth could be

made to swallow up all priests and the whole Church blown to atoms! But the Church is a world empire, a world power, which may be overcome in some localities, but cannot be destroyed.

"They feared the people," just as to-day they fear those Catholics who are faithful to their holy mother, the Church.

2. And yet, in the midst of these storms of persecution, Our Lord quietly went on His way, as though nothing had happened, pursued His duties and taught daily in the Temple.

The Church follows His example. Driven hither and thither, first from this country, then from that, she pursues her divine work calmly and quietly, as though she were living in perfect peace and security. If she is driven from the face of the earth, she enters the catacombs, and with her go the martyrs and confessors, Agnes and Julia, Sebastian and Pancratius, the farmer and the senator, the slave and the patrician. Thus it was centuries ago, thus it is in our day, and thus it will be always.

"I will remain with you to the end."

#### 186. *Second Purification of the Temple—Difficult Reforms*

"And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money changers, and the chairs of them that sold doves." (Matt. xxi, 12).

1. This is the second time that the Master rose in

anger against the misuse of holy things and places. Apparently, the first reform had not endured for any length of time. Should it be a matter of wonder to you, then, that certain deep-rooted evils in your parish will not immediately yield to your pleadings, warnings, and admonitions?

Even the Master was forced to return a second time to the disagreeable task. Let that be your consolation.

2. What untold difficulties the reform popes of the Middle Ages must have encountered in their attempts to uproot certain wide-spread abuses. How frequently they wielded the scourge of interdict, excommunication and suspension, in order to expel the violators from God's holy places.

Just as there was corruption in religious matters in the Israel of our Lords' time, so now likewise in the new Israel. Simony may have changed its form, but it is still with us; as are also the newer forms of spiritual profiteering and oppression.

"You are the merchants," remarks Ludolfus of Saxony, apostrophising contemporary ecclesiastics at the beginning of the 14th century; "you sell the doves; *i. e.*, the graces of the Holy Ghost; you do nothing except you are well paid for it." Christ beheld all this as He drove forth the despoilers from His Temple, thundering: "My house is a house of prayer; you have made it a den of thieves."

3. Thank God, those evil times have passed. The repeated warnings of the Church against all forms of simony and allied practices have borne fruit.

“And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple.”

187. *The Faith that Moves Mountains—Miracles and Prayer*

“Have the faith of God. Amen I say to you, that whosoever shall say to this mountain, Be thou removed and be cast into the sea, and shall not stagger in his heart, but believe that whatsoever he saith shall be done; it shall be done unto him.” (Mark xi, 20 sqq.; Matt. xxi, 20 sqq.)

1. Miracles, which accompanied the infant Church, still commend her to the minds and hearts of the people. No race, no country has been without these signs from Heaven. The cures at Lourdes surpass all human explanation, and have we not witnessed a great number of elevations to the altars of the Church, for which miracles are a necessary condition?

2. To be sure, miracles cannot by their nature be a permanent institution of the Church like the Sacraments. It is their unusualness that constitutes their weight as evidence.

But to the prayer of faith, that of the Apostles and priests, is promised, according to our Lord Himself, the power of miracles. It is the prayer that knows no limits and for which God and His power are as real as the sun in the heavens and the air we breathe.

A prayer shot through and through with doubts

and misgivings, with "ifs" and "buts," will never elicit a miracle.

At that time the promise attached to prayer may have seemed strange, nay unreal, to the Apostles. But a few months later, after the descent of the Holy Ghost, Peter speaks to the lame man: "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, arise, and walk. And he . . . stood and walked." (Acts iii, 6 sqq.)

188. *The Parable of the Vineyard—Demoralized Parishes*

(Luke xx, 9 sqq.; Mark xii, 1 sqq.; Matt. xxi, 33 sqq.)

1. In a few words Our Lord here presents to us the history of Israel with its tragic ending. The servants of God come, the great and small prophets, in order to recall the laborers to their duty. But they are despised, beaten, murdered. Then the King's Son comes in all His beauty and splendor. But He is crucified.

What will the King do?

"He will come and destroy the laborers and give the vineyard to others."

How strikingly this parable has found fulfillment in Israel!

2. But is it not applicable also, in some measure, to our own parish life? Are there not in some congregations men who are as stubborn and stiff-necked



as the vintagers of old; men and women who are the crux of the shepherd?

Nothing has been left undone to recall these wayward Catholics from the folly of their ways. One priest after another has been sent to them, old and experienced, young and eager. They have labored, striven, pleaded, threatened, and prayed, but all in vain. Anger, hatred, scorn, and even force were the answer.

The bishop sends his very best lieutenant. Upon him he places his hope: "It may be that, when they see him they will reverence him. They will respect his years, his ability, his piety, and holy zeal," the Bishop believes.

But alas! Even this last hope is frustrated. The evil is too deep-rooted. Godlessness, immorality, un-Catholic ideals, have spread their poison so completely through the congregation that all ordinary means fail. God Himself must take a hand, and how frequently He does! A catastrophe, a tragedy, a sudden and unprovided death—some punishment which He alone is capable of sending, will arouse the evil-doers and recall them to their senses.

But in our day we should never give up hope. To grace and love all things are possible.

189. *The Emperor's Tribute Money—Political Difficulties*

(Luke xx, 20 sqq.; Mark xii, 13 sqq.; Matt. xxii, 15 sqq.).

Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Cæsar or no?

1. The question of taxes and tributes was a clandestine, but passionately debated political question among the Jews.

The Sanhedrin had cleverly arranged to put the question to Our Lord, that His public answer might be used to discredit Him either with the people or with the Roman governor.

It appeared to them that they had prepared a dilemma, upon one of whose horns it was necessary for Him to impale Himself.

Cleverly our Lord wards off the blow and parries it with another: "Whose picture is this?" Then He propounds to them a principle which all must acknowledge: "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's."

What can they retort?

Conquered and defeated, they withdraw. The keen edge of the Master's logic had slashed their finely woven plans.

2. This incident in Our Lord's life contains a very valuable lesson for the priest.

It is, as is well known, one of the common charges of the enemy against the Catholic clergy that they are politicians who conspire against the best interests of our country. Fain would they involve us in some political scandal, that they might raise an accusing finger against us.

There are, as is also only too obvious, many social and political questions whose intricacies would soon involve him who attempted to unravel them. The enemies of the Church would gladly have a priest en-

tangle himself in these meshes. "Master," they say to him, "we know that you speak and teach rightly, and you do not respect any person . . . . Tell us what do you think?"

Great care should be exercised against publicly announcing political views. This is far different from making clear the underlying principles of some politico-social or economic issue. It is, unfortunately, true to-day that principles and political parties have little in common. The answer of Our Lord in this matter is an excellent example: "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's."

#### 190. *Divergence Between Words and Actions—The Logic of the People*

\*  
 "All things therefore whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do; but according to their works do ye not." (Matt. xxiii, 1 sqq.)

1. "Whatsoever they shall say to you, do." Why? Because they sit in Moses' place and represent the legitimate teaching authority.

It is clear that Our Lord meant that the personal unworthiness of the lawgiver presents no grounds for despising the law itself. God, in His wisdom, made the efficacy of the Sacraments independent of the character of the dispenser.

But it is also clear from the words of Our Lord that this divergence between teacher and teaching, be-

tween works and words, is, to say the least, incongruous.

What a tragedy if the Master were forced to address your flock: "What he says to you [in the name of the Church], that do; but according to his works do ye not."

2. No matter how clear and correct the distinction between a vocation and its fulfillment, it is a fact, unfortunate perhaps, that the people are not accustomed to draw such distinctions. There is the snap judgment of the crowd: "He who admonishes others to purity, piety, and perseverance, should be an example of these virtues himself." That is the logic of the people.

With what vehemence our Lord castigates this divergence between word and work in the eight condemnations of Phariseism! (v *supra*, n. 116.)

### 191. *The Widow's Mite—Donations of the Poor*

"And looking on, he saw the rich men cast their gifts into the treasury. And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in two brass mites. And he said: Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: For all these have of their abundance cast into the offerings of God: but she of her want hath cast in all the living that she had." (Luke xxi, 1 sqq.; cfr. Mark xii, 41 sqq.)

From this little incident may be drawn several noteworthy rules.

1. The Master is not opposed to the practice of offerings. Its justification is here acknowledged.

It gives the people an opportunity to bring to God in an inostensible, quiet manner, a small offering. "Alms for God" Our Lord calls the mite.

2. It is a beautiful trait of Jesus that He views with a benevolent eye all good things and deeds and does not withhold His praise and public recognition from any of them.

He praises the children, the faith of the Canaanite woman, the humility of the merchant from Capharnaum, He praises the generosity of the poor widow. Why not praise your people? It costs so little and yet is of so much value.

3. The generosity so touchingly, depicted in this incident has been an unvarying characteristic of the poor. Their money has built many a church and chapel, supported the missions, and provided for priests and pastors.

These offerings are sacred money, a "gift of God." Sacred because of its origin. Almost invariably it is money saved from the necessities of life, earned by hard labor, and given with heroic generosity. Sacred because of the intention of the giver, who gives it to God to be used in His service. Pity the priest who would abuse this confidence, desecrate such sacred money, set at naught the pious wishes of the donors and think only of his own enrichment!

The good people place confidence in the priest above all others and therefore demand no control. But there is one who controls—the all-knowing God! Will He not demand an accounting for the mites of the poor?

192. *The Proselytes—Experiences among Non-Catholics*

"These [certain non Jewish church-goers] therefore came to Philip . . . and desired him, saying: Sir, we would see Jesus." (John xii, 21 sqq.)

1. Some strangers, probably Greeks who were visiting in the Holy City, desired to see our Lord and asked Philip that he take them in.

The Master received them with His usual benevolence, and there is little doubt but that this visit was for them an occasion of abundant graces.

"The hour is come," remarks the Master, "in which the Son of Man is to be glorified."

2. There are few priests in our modern cities whose experiences have not been similar. The Catholic priest in mixed communities is placed in a position which subjects him to the closest scrutiny of non-Catholics. It may be that in some there is an unexpressed desire, after having been influenced by his mode of life and personality, of "seeing the Lord," to converse with him personally. A Philip can be easily found to introduce them.

And then the priest can experience the joy of knowing that "the hour is come in which the Son of Man is to be glorified."

3. Alas! the very opposite may also occur. More than one, perhaps, whom an unconscious desire for the true Church brought to the presbytery, has been scared away by the poor impression which the priest

made upon him. The Church, unfortunately, is judged by the priests who represent her.

193. *The Grain of Wheat—Sacerdotal Spirit of Sacrifice*

“Amen, Amen I say to you, unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth along. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” (John xii, 24 sq.)

1. The little seed must disappear in the dark earth and disintegrate, so that golden grain may come from its living death.

So, too, the Son of God had to deliver Himself unto death, that man might be saved. From death alone new life arises.

A beautiful picture! *Exinanivit semetipsum, dilexit me et tradidit semetipsum pro me*, comments the great Apostle on this spirit of sacrifice in Christ.

2. Should not this be true of every worthy priest? To be a priest means above all things to offer oneself as a sacrifice for the people.

One thing is certain: God has made salvation dependent on sacrifice, and even the bestowal of grace is contingent upon sacrifice.

A priest's supernatural influence upon souls can be exercised only to the extent that he fructifies his work by sacrifice.

“Unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone.”

3. The priest should live, work, and suffer for



others. This is possible only if he denies himself, renounces his own will, and foregoes his own pleasure.

If he has learned to do this, then the best, the most noble in him is free to become active. The hard egoistic hull of the grain is burst open and the interior powers begin to assert themselves.

"If it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

Self-sacrifice more than anything else reveals the entire capacity of a noble priestly soul; it frees the divine in man.

194. *"Father, Save Me from this Hour"—  
The Hour of Sacrifice*

1. Expiatory death is most difficult. Even our Lord feels the weight of the sacrifice before which He now stands, and from the depth of His Soul comes the cry: "Now my soul is troubled. And what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour." (John xii, 27).

In a short while we shall again hear the same words, piercing the darkness of the Garden on Mt. Olivet.

2. Are there not hours in the life of a priest—even a holy priest—which wring similar emotions from the heart, similar words from the lips,—hours, which it seems impossible to bear? "Father, save me from this hour."

Such agonizing words are justifiable, being an echo of the words of Christ, Our Lord. Of Him, however, it was added: "For this cause I came into this hour. Father, glorify thy name."

There is no better way for man to glorify God than to raise his heart to God in the hour of his suffering and, to cry out in complete surrender: "Father, glorify thy name; glorify thyself in me!"

4. "A voice therefore came from heaven: I have both glorified it and will glorify it again."

And then, when the darkness has passed, and the battle is over, a sweet peace and calm comes over the soul. The voice of the Father in Heaven can be heard saying: "I am glorified," *i. e.*, I am satisfied with you; you have fought the good fight; be comforted.

#### 195. *The Attraction of the Cross—The Priest's Power of Attraction*

1. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself." (John xii, 32).

Truly a divine word, in opposition to all human terms of victory.

In the words of the world, it might read: "When I ascend my throne, when I occupy a position of glory, when I arrive at the high-priest's office, then, but not till then, shall I come into great influence and rule over many peoples."

How different are the words we hear from the Cross!

2. To draw all things to oneself is also the ideal of every priest. How can it be accomplished?

Who in your experience exerts the greatest influence? Who exercised the greatest influence in the

affairs of your life? Whose pulpit, whose confessional is most besieged?

Unquestionably, natural powers and accomplishments, such as talents, approachability, learning, conversational ability, experience, cleverness, etc., are great factors. But the true source of the magnetism of the priest is and will always remain his supernatural qualities.

The reverence and honor which are paid him rest on the assumption that he is a super-man, a likeness of the divine Master, who, according to the belief of the people, pours out His heavenly graces on His priests in great abundance.

The multitude is attracted to him from whom radiates purity and holiness.

But where are those virtues to be acquired, if not in the advanced School of the Cross?

"If I be lifted up on the cross, I will draw all things to me," is applicable in this sense to the priest.

3. But these words have another meaning in the life and history of the Church.

He who becomes a confessor for Christ's sake, receives the greatest honor and love from the people whom he serves.

Again and again in the history of the Church has this been demonstrated. The persecution of God's priests called forth remarkable demonstrations from the people.

"If I be lifted up on the cross, I will draw all things to myself."

196. *The Timid Followers—Pastoral Consideration*

"However, many of the chief men also believed in him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, that they might not be cast out of the synagogue. For they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God." (John xii, 42 sq.)

I. Have the times changed in this regard? Are there not numberless examples of this type of Christian? Every priest could relate instances of this sort.

In the circumstances in which the Church is pursuing her divine mission to-day it is essential that a Catholic holding a position either in the industrial or in the political world, have a solid character and a firm faith, if he is to "confess" Christ and His Church.

There are many who are Catholics in their private lives, but do not show their religion in public. They would not like to be pointed out as "Roman Catholics" or "clericals." One must live as the worldling lives, be successful, have a career, and hence it is necessary to take note of the sentiments and opinions of those whose good will is necessary to attain the end proposed.

Let us be just. The position of the man in the world is no easy one, especially in a country like ours, where, in spite of the boasted equality of religions, the name "Catholic" is generally more of a hindrance than a help.

Nor can it be expected that all men should feel the call to a life of extraordinary virtue.

2. What should be the attitude of the priest towards those in power?

It is significant and instructive for our purpose that Christ found no fault with Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea for the secretive manner in which they held their intercourse with Him.

An animadversion, particularly in public, could have but one result. It would make more difficult the position of such people, besides offending them and perhaps breaking the bond which unites them with the Church.

Such cases require extreme tact and careful consideration. The weakness of such men and the difficulty of the position they find themselves in, must be recognized, while at the same time a welcoming hand should be extended to them to strengthen their wavering faith.

Harsh words or inconsiderate actions are inexcusable and nearly always harmful.

### 197. *"Judge Not"—Severe Judgments against the Priest*

"And if any man hear my words, and keep them not, I do not judge him; for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world." (John xii, 47).

#### i. "I judge him not."

Are these words true of you, or do you pronounce judgment against this or that member of your congregation, this or that organization? And what judgments! Severe, relentless decisions that cut your ad-

versary to the quick, decisions based on incomplete evidence, or surmises and rash thoughts, or the vapors of a momentary passion.

2. What is the result of such decisions and judgments? Do they bless and unify? Far from it! Rather, they increase existing hatreds, enmities, divisions, religious differences within the Church.

“I am not come to judge, but to save.”

198. *The Destruction of the Temple—The Decay of the Priesthood and its Consequences*

(Matt. xxiv, 2; Mark xiii, 2; Luke xix, 44; xxi, 5 sq.)

“Amen I say to you: There shall not be here left a stone upon a stone.”

1. In amazement, the disciples direct the attention of the Master to the beautiful Temple. It seems rooted in eternity, growing out of the very mountain rocks themselves!

Alas! how exterior appearances often belie the inner weakness and impending collapse.

Our Lord directs attention to the resplendent pile with the striking words: “There shall not be left here a stone upon a stone.”

And the synagogue, rejected by God, will go down with the ruins of the Temple’s walls.

2. God instituted His Church on a rock, with the promise that it should stand forever.

While the promise that the gates of hell shall not prevail against her, is general, the churches of in-

dividual countries or districts are not included therein.

Thus we see that the ancient Church of St. Cyprian in Carthage is no more; the Church that once flourished in the Lybian desert has perished, and the seven holy cities that once constituted a part of the infant Church in Asia Minor are gone.

Why did God allow this?

It is a mystery;—but this much is certain: The destruction of the Christian communities, like the destruction of the Jewish Temple, resulted from the decay of the priesthood.

3. There is a human as well as a divine element in the Church of Christ. The one is eternal, the other, temporal. The divine promise of indestructibility must not be misconstrued or misinterpreted; to do so might prove disastrous. The Church of your own district or country, no matter how it flourishes now, may crumble before the onslaught of an insidious enemy.

O God! what of the future, with its presage of ruin and destruction?

“Wherefore he that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall.”

### 199. *False Messiahes—Modern Fictions Concerning Christ*

“Take heed you be not seduced; for many will come in my name, saying, I am he; and the time is at hand: go ye not therefore after them.” (Luke xxi, 8; cfr. Matt. xxiv, 5; Mark xiii, 6).



1. We know how this prophecy was fulfilled at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. But is it not true that these same treacherous frauds are being constantly dressed up in modern trappings?

Outside the Church the belief in Christ has become "the problem of the Christ." Each rationalist critic sets up his own pseudo-Christ, with some new lineament, feature or characteristic. Each caricature is placed before the world as the infallible result of "higher criticism" and "scientific research." What must Christ not submit to!

2. And alas! there are Catholic priests and professors who draw from the same well, who are led astray by the semblance of infidel learning.

"Follow them not!" Christ warns us.

3. How different is the true Christ, the Christ of the Catholic faith and tradition! He lives and reigns in His Church in gripping reality throughout the centuries, spreading light and warmth like the sun. How ridiculous to seek the brilliant Day Star with a murky lantern!

### 200. *The Parable of the Virgins*

1. *Portentous Distinctions*.—"Five of them were foolish and five wise." (Matt. xxv, 1-14).

Who could have discerned the difference between these virgins, had he seen them as they slept, with lamps at their sides, awaiting the arrival of the bridal procession? All appear equally beautiful, equally good, and equally well prepared. But one hour later

the difference is disclosed; only one-half of them are in the bridal hall, flooded with light, music, and joy.

Who could have discerned the fateful difference between the lamps? Who could point out the vital difference in a group of priests—a difference which will continue into eternity? All appear alike, wear the same dress, hold the same position, and profess similar ideals. But the hour of eternity will reveal a vast difference between them:—the fateful lack of oil, *i. e.*, of grace and merit in some.

2. *Fateful Deceptions*.—"Give us your oil, for our lamps are gone out."

The foolish virgins lived in the belief that their lamps were filled and in readiness, "*sed fiducia in fatuis vana, in prudentibus vera est*" (Ludolfus). Hope should not be blind, but the result of intelligent endeavor and fruitful effort.

How easily such deception may take possession of the priest, for with him preparedness is considered a matter of course. "Because thou sayest: I am rich, and made wealthy, and have need of nothing: and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Apoc. iii, 17). *Nosce te ipsum*.

3. *Fateful Tardiness*.—"Lord, Lord open to us! But he answering said: Amen I say to you, I know you not."

How obvious it would seem that to the priest a door should be open for which he possesses the key and which he unlocks for so many others. But "*clausa*

*est ianua, ianua misericordiae, gratiae, gloriae*" (Ludolfus). All appeals are in vain. "*Nescio vos*," a thousandfold horrific sentence in the ears of him whom the Master made one of His own, and who now must hear the irrevocable condemnation: "*Nescio vos*."

201. *The Parable of the Talents—Unemployed Talents  
in the Church*  
(Matt. xxv, 14–30)

1. Again and again this parable is cited in the Mass of the Holy Confessors, to warn the priest that he must employ his talents and not bury them. Nor is this admonition superfluous. What a vast store of talents, abilities, and accomplishments are often lost to society and the Church because they are allowed to lie buried in barren soil.

2. Several reasons for this may be adduced. Frequently failure arises from faulty training, or from a training which does not adequately prepare a man for the needs and demands of everyday life. Again, it may be faulty direction, improper guidance, lack of encouragement or seemingly inherited sloth, indolence, attributable to circumstances or, not infrequently, to love of ease and lack of character. Or it may be the lack of a spiritual incentive. Thus there is a satisfaction in the small duties of an allotted position, while the remainder of the time is devoted to the flotsam and jetsam of life or to *dolce far niente*.

3. Not everyone has initiative and energy. These qualities must be awakened, encouraged, and directed. Thus it is that many a young priest with great talents

and possibilities gradually comes to be numbered among the last three servants. His abilities are moribund, while the world, the Catholic press, organizations and societies call for ever more and more talent and zeal.

This unemployment of intellectual capital must be attributed not only to individuals, but to those who direct them as well.

## 202. *The Faithful Servant—Priestly Labors and Compensation*

“Well done, good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” (Matt. xxv, 21).

1. The status of the children of God does not destroy the relationship of man to God. Man here below is and remains a servant of God and will be judged, as is here pointed out, according to this relationship.

2. *Servi Dei*, “Servants of God,” the Church lovingly calls her saints. “Faithful servant of God” is the most becoming title for a priest.

The position of servant, however, carries with it the duty of employing one’s whole time and all one’s talents in the service of him who is being served.

Deserving of praise is that servant who serves his master with a service of love, and not merely with a service of appearances; faithful is he who places the interests of his Master above all others and who avoids even the least conscious act of unfaithfulness.

3. How beautiful is the priestly life if it spends itself in the service of God! How worthy of reverence is an aged priest whose hair has grown grey in this service! He is worn out and longs for eternal rest. He has "fought the good fight, finished the course, and kept the faith." He knows that a crown of justice is laid up for him, "which the Lord, the just judge will render to me."

4. "Because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many."

How little, after all, we do for God! Yet, how great the reward! For a short day of earthly labor,—eternal rest; for a short day of earthly combat,—sempiternal peace; for a short day of earthly suffering and sacrifice—unending joy.

"Enter thou into the joy of your Lord," or, as the Master expressed it at His departure: "I go to prepare a place for you; I will come again, and will take you to myself; that where I am, you also may be." (John xiv, 3).

### 203. *Warnings of the Storm—Lack of Foresight*

"Take you heed therefore; behold I have foretold you all things." (Mark xiii, 23; cf. John xvi, 4).

1. One of the consoling characteristics of Christ's providential care of His Church is His prediction of the troublous times awaiting His followers. He does not depart from them until He has clearly foretold the storms they must endure throughout the succeeding centuries.

Pity the army whose general is without foresight; pity the herd whose shepherd is without vision! What will happen when the calculating enemy falls upon such unprepared army or flock!

2. Our Lord leaves with us an important admonition in these words recorded by the Evangelist.

*Tela praevisa minus nocent.* To careless nonchalance and failure to heed the Master's admonitions must be attributed the rout of the Apostles when the violence of the enemy overtook them. They were unprepared for the combat.

Again and again, in the history of the Church, this incident is tragically repeated. The signs of the approaching storm were clearly visible. Inspired voices called out lonely warnings in the darkness. But sometimes even the appointed watchmen on the towers were oblivious to the threatening danger.

Rather than put forth efforts to meet the danger, they preferred to live on in the enjoyment of a false and dangerous peace—*et nihil horum intellexerunt*. The predictions were poohpoohed as the idle tales of gossiping women.

But alas, later events revealed the slothful fallacy, and to-day we behold the ruins: half of Europe torn from the bosom of the Church, estranged, embittered, inimical even to this day.

Let us recall that, before the so-called Reformation, a few inspired voices were raised in warning, but the multitude went on unheeding, until the catastrophe had well nigh buried the Church under its debris.

And what of the present?

Is there not a general apathy and a tragic disregard for the warnings uttered now and then by a few courageous voices?

"Take heed therefore; behold I have foretold you all things."

204. *The Last Judgment—Anxiety and Consolation for the Priest*

(Matt xxv, 31 sqq.; Luke xxi, 37 sq.)

1. The Last Judgment belongs to the greatest and most stupendous mysteries of our holy faith, and it is well that the priest should occasionally contemplate this thrilling picture. The effect is as that of a magnificent landscape, the storm-swept ocean or a distant mountain peak bathed in radiant sunshine. It is awe-inspiring, thrilling, as well as quickening, enlivening, revivifying.

The day of judgment is the day of final reckoning between God and man, the day of eternal evaluation.

How tragic, should the flock occupy the right and the shepherd the left; should the laity be numbered among the sheep, whilst the spiritual leader stood among the goats!

2. But the Last Judgment has its consolations as well for the priest. In times of severe trial and persecution even the faithful of God may become discouraged. It is well, then, to turn to Our Lord and behold him in the final victory of the Kingdom of God.

He directs the attention of His enemies to this great



day, as He stands helpless before His judges. "Hereafter you shall see the Son of Man . . . coming in the clouds of heaven."

Even now the Church enjoys temporary triumphs; but the final victory will come only with her historical end.

In the darkness of these days of trial and probation, many wander from the ways of truth, laugh to scorn the warnings of God, just as in the days of the Flood and of Sodom and Gomorrha.

But the Day of Judgment will come. Then the curtain which separates the present from the future will drop; the eternal truth will no longer shine like a far distant star in the depths of night. As lightning from the east to the west, so will Christ, the Eternal Truth, appear. So unmistakably, so impellingly vivid as lightning against the darkness of night, will He come forth. Then all doubting and unbelief will disappear. The Truth will triumph majestically over scoffers and agnostics. They will be struck speechless and overcome with confusion. *Ergo erravimus!*

3. That is the Day of the Lord, who demands justice and a proper accounting by all. That is also the day of the Church, who will rejoice in the triumph of her Lord; it is the day of the priest, who as a representative of Christ and His Church beholds the fulfillment of the words: "Who hears you, hears me; who despises you, despises me."

## APPENDIX

*Prayer of St. Ignatius of Loyola for Generosity  
in the Service of God (To be recited at the close  
of each Meditation)*

Eternal Word! Incarnate Son of God! I beg of Thee, teach me true generosity; teach me to serve Thee as You deserve;—to give without counting the cost;—to battle without regarding the wounds;—to labor without seeking respite;—to offer myself up without a thought of reward, save the consciousness of having done Thy Holy Will. Amen.

END

## INDEX

### A

Abraham, 70.  
 Agnes, St., 290.  
 Adulation, 50.  
 Adulterous woman, The, 157 sq.  
 Aloofness, 55 sq., 153, 281.  
*Alter Christus*, The priest an.  
     1 sqq., 42, 211.  
 Ambition, Inordinate, 13, 43,  
     125 sq.  
 "Americanism," 6.  
 Andrew, St., 189.  
 Anger, Holy, 20 sq., 129 sq.;  
     Of the Apostles, 143 sq.; Of  
     priests, 144.  
*Animae candidae*, 127.  
 Anointing of Christ, 282 sqq.  
 Asceticism, 106.  
 Assistant priests, 57 sq.  
 Association in evil, 181.  
 Athanasius, St., 109, 189.  
 Attraction, The priest's power  
     of, 302 sq.  
 Augustine, St., 73, 217.  
 Avarice, 13 sq., 235.  
 Awakenings, Spiritual, 253 sqq.

### B

Banishment of Christ, 109 sq.  
 Banquets, 226, 227 sq.  
 Baptism, of Jesus, 10 sq.; of  
     the disciples, 23 sq.  
 Benedict, St., 11, 121.  
 Bernard, St., 11, 121.

Bethania, 246 sq., 282.  
 Bethsaida, 59.  
 Blessings, 114.  
 Blind, Cure of the, 162 sq.;  
     The, from Jericho, 279 sq.;  
     Parable of the two men, 181  
     sq.  
 Body, Inordinate care of, 12.  
 Boniface, St., 11, 222.  
 Bureaucracy, Clerical, 207 sq.

### C

Calumny, 175 sq.  
 Calvinism, 106, 144.  
 Cana, Wedding feast at, 15  
     sqq., 18.  
 Canaanite woman, The, 111 sq.,  
     298.  
 Capharnaum, 30, 34, 67.  
 Capitalism, 85 sq., 164 sq., 196  
     sq.  
*Causae piae*, 110.  
 Celibacy, 267 sqq.  
 Censuring, The art of, 76 sq.  
 Charity, 36 sq., 61 sq., 103, 128,  
     151 sqq., 173, 280.  
 Child-murderers, Clerical, 129.  
 Children, Christ's praise of,  
     126 sq.; The priest as the  
     friend of, 128 sq., 269 sq.  
 China, 128, 222.  
 Christ, the Model of the priest  
     and pastor, 1 sqq.; The  
     Prophet, 25 sq.; 31 sqq.; As  
     Preacher, 33 sq.; Ascetical  
     life of, 39 sq.; The prototype

- of confessors, 157 sqq.; And  
 scandals, 237 sqq.  
*Chronique scandaleuse*, 125.  
 Church assessments, 123 sq.  
 Church, The, Power of, 259  
 sqq.  
 City on a mountain, The, 66 sq.  
 Clemens August, Abp., 189.  
 Clement Hoffbauer, St., 36.  
 Clement of Rome, 109.  
 Cockle in the wheat, The, 85  
 sqq.  
 Commercialism, 194 sqq.  
 Communion, 108 sq.  
 Comparisons, Uncharitable, 263.  
 Compassion, 71 sq., 73, 96 sq.,  
 100 sq., 252.  
 Compensation, The eternal, 236  
 sq.  
 Confessional, The worldling in  
 the, 25 sq.; Power of the,  
 53; Admonition in the, 54;  
 Bethsaida and the, 59; A  
 word for the, 147 sq.  
 Confessor, The priest as, 174  
 sq.; Christ as, 207. Severe  
 and considerate, 242 sq.  
 Consolation, The priest's need  
 of, 147; Thought of the Last  
 Judgment as, 314 sq.  
 Consoler, The priest as, 146 sq.  
 Converts, 21 sq., 163.  
 Corban, 110.  
 Corpus Christi processions, 285  
 sq.  
 Correction, Fraternal, 240 sq.  
 Cross, Love of the, 277 sq.;  
 Attraction of the, 302 sq.  
 Curé of Ars, 167.  
 Cyprian, St., 167, 307.  
 Cyril, St., 167.
- D
- David, 70.
- Decay, of a parish 293; Of the  
 priesthood, 306 sq.  
 Deceptions, Fateful, 309.  
 Denial of Christ, 190.  
 Desert, Jesus in the, 11 sq.  
 Deserters, Clerical, 190.  
 Despots, Clerical, 168 sq.  
 Devil (see exorcism); Delivery  
 from a blind and dumb, 173  
 sqq.  
 Divergence between words and  
 actions, 296 sq.  
 Dives and Lazarus, 236 sq.  
 Dogs, 112.  
 Dominic, St., 11.  
 Drachma, Parable of the lost,  
 232.  
 Dying without the Sacraments,  
 248 sqq.
- E
- Elect, number of the, 216 sqq.  
 Eleventh hour, The, 276.  
 Elias, 70.  
 Encouragement, 106, 147.  
 Encyclopedists, 181.  
 Entrance into Jerusalem, 285  
 sq.  
 Envy, 23 sq.  
 Error, No compromises with,  
 203 sqq.  
 Eucharist, The, 28 sqq., 108 sq.  
 Evil, The problem of, 86 sq.  
 Exemptions, Clerical, 123 sq.  
 Exorcism, 35, 79, 91 sq.  
 Exorcist, The, 130 sq.
- F
- Failure, Apparent, 105.  
 Faith, Spirit of, 243 sq.; Moves  
 mountains, 292 sq.  
 Families, Visiting, 246 sq.  
 Father, The priest as, 233 sq.

Fear of God, 188 sq.  
 Fictions concerning Christ, 307 sq.  
 Fig-tree, Parable of the barren, 205 sq.  
 Fisher of men, The, 46 sq.  
 Fishes, Miraculous catch of, 45 sq.  
 Flock without a shepherd, 96 sq.  
 Food, The mysterious, 28 sqq.  
 Foreign missions, 111 sqq., 219 sq.  
 Francis de Sales, St., 48, 144.  
 Francis Hieronymo, 233.  
 Francis of Assisi, St., 11, 48, 121.  
 Francis Xavier, St., 48, 144 sq.  
 Frequent Communion, 115 sq.  
 Friend, Parable of the impetuous, 172 sq.  
 Friendship, 246 sq.

## G

Girdle and lamp, 197 sq.  
 Glorification, Personal, 50.  
 Good Shepherd, The, 137 sq., 165 sqq., 211 sqq.  
 Grace, 92, 146, 201 sq., 276.  
 Grain of wheat, Parable of the, 300 sq.  
 Gregory VII, 189.  
 Guests, Parable of the invited, 227 sqq.

## H

Harvest and laborers, Parable of, 97 sq.  
 Hatred, of the world, 140 sq., Of Christ, 210 sq.; Of the priesthood, 213 sq.; The logic of, 256.  
 Headwinds, 105.

Hen and her brood, Parable of the, 224 sq.  
 Herod, 99, 222 sq.  
 Herodias, 99.  
 Heroes of the faith, 188 sq.  
 Heroism, Priestly, 250 sq.  
 Higher criticism, 308.  
 Hireling, The, 169.  
 Holy Land, The, 70.  
 Home, Apostolate of the, 152 sqq.  
 Home missions, 220.  
 Hope, 106.  
 Householder's treasure, 87 sq.  
 Human respect, 188 sq.  
 Humility, 149 sq., 245, 264 sqq.

## I

Ideals, Worldly and other-worldly, 194 sqq.  
 Ignatius of Antioch, St, 167, 189.  
 Ignatius of Loyola, St., 11, 48, 246, 121; Prayer of, 316.  
 Illuminati, 181.  
 Index of Forbidden Books, 116.  
 India, 97, 103, 222.  
 Indifferentism, 161 sq.  
 Industrialism, 165, 195, 196.  
 Ingratitude, 258 sq.  
 Inheritance quarrels, 191 sq.  
 Innocence, Safeguarding, 128 sq.  
 Interior recollection, 38 sq.  
 Invalids, 60 sq.  
 Irreconcilableness, Clerical, 240 sq.  
 Isaiah, 14.

## J

Jacob, At the well of, 25 sq.  
 Jairus, Daughter of, 93 sq.  
 Jansenism, 115.

Japan, 222.  
 Jealousy, 23 sq., 131.  
 Jerusalem, 137, 142, sq., 285 sq.,  
 288 sq., 308.  
 Jesuits, 222.  
 Jews, 26 sqq., 70, 210.  
 John the Baptist, 14, 23 sq.,  
 73, 76, 98 sq.  
 Joseph of Arimathea, 305.  
 Journeyings, Apostolic, 95 sq.  
 Joys of the priesthood, 145 sq.  
 Judas, 108, 115, 283 sq.  
 Judge, Parable of the unjust,  
 261 sq.  
 Judgments, Superficial, 263;  
 Severe against the priest, 305  
 sq.; The last, 314 sq.  
 Julia, St., 290.

## K

Kenrick, Abp., 167.  
 Ketteler, E. von, 134 sq., 167.  
 Keys, Power of the, 120.  
 Kilmer, Joyce, 90.  
 Kulturkampf, 222.  
 Kingdom, Messianic, 260 sq.

## L

Laborers in the Lord's vine-  
 yard, 97 sq.  
 Lamb of God, 14 sq.  
 Landlordism, 103.  
 Lay apostolate, 130 sqq.  
 Lazarus, 247 sqq., 253 sq.  
 Leonard of Port Maurice, 233.  
 Lepers, Cure of, 48 sqq., 257 sq.  
 Leprosy, 48 sqq., 92, 257 sq.  
 Levi, 54 sq.  
 Library, The priest's, 87 sq.  
 Lievens, P., 103.  
 Light of the World, 65 sq., 97,  
 140, 158 sqq.

Loaves, Multiplication of the,  
 102 sq.  
 Lohmann, J. B., S. J., xii.  
 Loyalty, 190.  
 Ludolfus, 75, 131, 184, 291.  
 Lunatic, The, 122.

## M

Macaulay, 118.  
 Magdalen, 232.  
 Magnetism, of Christ, 63; of  
 the priest, 64.  
 Marriage, Indissolubility of,  
 266 sqq.  
 Martha, 152 sq.  
 Mary, Blessed Virgin, 17, 18  
 sq., 182 sq.  
 Massillon, 217, 218.  
 Master and servant, 244 sqq.  
 Masters, Two, 234 sq.  
 Mayence, 135.  
 Meekness, 149 sq.  
 Merchant of Capharnaum, The,  
 67 sq.  
 Messias, The, 12, 223.  
 Messiasess, False, 307 sq.  
 Miracles, 292 sq.  
 Misers, Clerical, 192 sqq.  
 Missionaries, 111 sqq., 167.  
 Mixed marriages, 205.  
 Modernism, 115 sq.  
 Monica, St., 73.  
 Morning prayer, 38 sq.  
 Mortification, 123.  
 Moses, 70.  
 Mother of the priest, 183.  
 Mustard seed, Parable of the,  
 208 sqq.

## N

Naim, The young man of, 71  
 sq.

Nazareth, 19, 31 sqq., 139 sq.  
Neglected parishes, 100 sq.  
Nepotism, 192, 226.  
Neumann, Bp., 167.  
Nicodemus, 21, 305.  
Nietzsche, Fr., 73.  
Non-Catholics, Experiences  
among, 299 sq.

O

*Occasionarii*, 133.  
Offerings of the faithful, 297  
sqq.  
Old age, 198 sqq., 312.  
Old Testament, 73.  
Ordination, 11.

P

Pagans, 170, 219 sq.  
Pancratius, St., 290.  
Paralytic, Cure of the, 52 sq.  
Parish work in cities, 95 sq.  
Pastoral problem, A, 211 sq.  
Pastors and their assistants, 57  
sqq.  
Patriotism, 68 sqq.  
Paul, St., ix, 126, 132, 134.  
Peace, 204.  
Persecution, 109 sq., 250, 265,  
289 sq.  
Personality, The priest's, 37  
sq., 66.  
Peter, St., 40, 89, 106 sq., 116  
sqq., 122, 124, 189, 277.  
Peter's mother-in-law, 40 sq.  
Pharisees, 24, 57, 77, 79, 115  
sqq., 148 sq., 157 sq., 160, 161,  
184 sqq., 188 sq., 223, 235,  
262 sq.  
Philip, 299.  
Philosophy, 88.  
Pilate, 223.  
Pius VI, 189.

Pius VII, 189.  
Pius IX, 189.  
Pius X, 115.  
Pius XI, 109.  
Polemics, 161.  
Political problems, 223 sq.;  
Views, 296.  
Polycarp, St., 167, 189.  
Poor, Care of the, 73 sq.; In-  
vite the, 225 sq.; Donations  
to the, 297 sqq.  
Poverty, 73 sq., 273 sqq.  
Power, Lust of, 13 sq.  
Prayer, 103 sqq., 121 sq., 123,  
134, 170 sqq., 243 sq., 292 sq.  
Preaching, 33 sq., 154 sq.  
Press, Catholic, 132, 311.  
Priesthood, A holy, 215; De-  
cay of the, 306 sq.  
Priest, Office of, 4 sqq.; A  
leader in the community, 51  
sq.  
Privileges, Clerical, 123 sq.  
Prodigal Son, Parable of the,  
233.  
Proselytes, 299 sq.  
Protestants, 27 sq.  
Prudence, Pastoral, 230 sq.  
Publican, Pharisee and, 262 sq.  
Public officials, 30 sq.  
Public opinion, 155 sq.  
Pulpit, The university of the  
people, 88.

R

Radicalism, 71.  
Rationalism, 186.  
Rebuking, The art of, 77.  
*Recidivi*, 179 sqq.  
Reforms, 290 sq.  
Relatives, Meddlesome, 80 sq.  
Renegades, 85 sqq.  
Responsibilities, 201 sq.  
Retreats, Yearly, 12, 99 sq., 180.



Rich man, Parable of the, 192 sqq., Partiality to the, 261 sq.; The rich young man, 271 sq.  
 Righteousness of the Pharisees, 184.  
 Rigorism, 217.  
 Ritual, 228.  
 Romuald, St., 121.  
 Rudigier, Bp., 167.

## S

Sabbath and Sunday, 207 sq.  
 Sacred Heart of Jesus, 101, 129, 147.  
 Sacrifice, 301 sq.  
 Sadducees, 115, 160, 161.  
 Saints, ix.  
 Salome, 278 sq.  
 Salt without savor, 133 sq.  
 Salvaging the wreckage, 135 sq.  
 Samaritan, The Good, 151 sq.  
 Samaritans, Jews and, 26 sqq.  
 Sanhedrin, 163 sq.  
 Scandal, 132 sq., 187 sq., 237 sq.  
 Scrupulousness, 94 sq.  
 Sebastian, St., 290.  
 Seclusion, Clerical, 55 sqq.  
 Seed, The, and the growing plant, 84 sq.  
*"Segregatus a populo,"* 6.  
 Separation from Rome, 289 sq.  
 Sermon on the Mount, 62 sq., 64 sq.  
 Sermons, 33 sq., 117, 223 sq.  
 Servants, The alert, 198 sqq.; The unforgiving, 242 sq.; Of God, 311 sq.  
 Sheep, Parable of the lost, 137 sqq., 231 sq.  
 Shepherds, Bad, 96 sq., 168 sq.  
 Sick, Christ's dealing with the,

40 sq.; A model of pastoral sick care, 247 sqq.  
 Simon, the Pharisee, 76 sq.  
 Simony, 168.  
 Simplicity, Apostolic, 75.  
 Slandering the Church and her clergy, 175 sqq.  
 Social activity of the clergy, 102 sq.  
 Social gatherings, Priestly participation in, 15 sqq., 125.  
 Soldier of Christ, The, 90, 160 sqq.  
 Solomon, 70, 210.  
 Sower, Parable of the, 82 sq.  
 Spirit, The unclean, 35 sq.  
 Squalor, Urban, 36 sq.  
 Stang, Bp., 217, 218.  
 Stoning, Three kinds of, 214.  
 Storms, On the sea, The 89 sq., 106 sq.; In the life of the priest, *ibid.*; Warnings, 312 sq.  
 Study, Need of continued, 87 sq.  
 Successes, 145 sq.  
 Sympathy, Priestly, 252.

## T

Table-talk, Clerical, 124 sq.  
 Tactlessness, 284 sq.  
 Talents, Unemployed, 310 sq.  
 Tardiness, Fateful, 309.  
 Taxes, 294 sqq.  
 Temple, First cleansing of, 20 sq., Second, 290 sq.; Destruction of, 306 sq.  
 Temptations, 12 sqq.  
 Thabor, 120, 134.  
 Thomas à Becket, 189.  
 Thought before action, 229 sq.  
 Timidity, 304 sq.  
 Traitors, 255.

Transfiguration, The, 120 sqq.,  
134.

Tree and its fruit, 178 sq.

Tribute money, The emperor's,  
294 sqq.

## U

Unbelief, Inconsistency of, 75  
sq.; Tactics of, 162 sq.; The  
logic of, 256.

Unchastity, 92.

Universalist, Christ the only  
true, 69.

## V

Vanity, 139.

Vincent de Paul, 48, 128, 225  
sqq.

Vincent Ferreri, 233.

Vineyard, Laborers in the, 275  
sq.; Parable of the, 293 sq.

Virgins, Parable of the, 308  
sqq.

*Vitandi*, 241 sq.

Vocations, Extraordinary, 54  
sq.; Postponed, 55; Apos-  
tolic, 62 sq., 110 sq.

## W

Warnings of the storm, 312  
sqq.

Weakness, To be avoided, 264  
sqq.

Wealth, The dangers of, 272  
sq.

Wedding feast, Christ at the,  
15 sqq.

Wheat, Grain of, 300 sq.

Widow's mite, The, 297 sqq.

Women, as disciples of Christ,  
78 sq.; In the rectory, 78 sq.;  
In the service of the Master,  
282 sq.

Worldly-mindedness, 7, 39, 134,  
153.

## Y

Yoke, Christ's, 148 sq.

## Z

Zacheus, 281 sq.

*Zeitgeist*, 127, 128, 140, 141,  
214.















